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COVER: As well as bashing berms all day long BMW's WEC crusader David Knight can crush cars with his bare hands and skin submarines with his teeth – honest guvner!
© Sully

CONTENTS: Gurning Zach Osborne lays down the awesome power of his UTAG Yamaha in Liverpool's Echo Arena
© Sully



COMMENT

A long time ago I wrote in this here comment how anyone who rides them there dirt bikes – whatever their standard – must have a fine vein of masochism in them and it's a statement I'm sticking to. Think about it. What sort of person would go out in the mud, wind and rain, push their body to breaking point – quite likely bouncing their love chimes off the petrol tank in the process – and call it fun? And quite often the bigger the bruise, the purpler the plum or more spectacular the x-ray the bigger the grin on the owner's mush! Like I said, dirt bike riders are like masochism miners, always on the look-out for that thin seam of personal pain to excavate.

Anyway, in a yin yang kind of deal, to balance out the masochism we need a dollop of sadism and for that look no further than the spectators who turn out in their thousands to get their fill of suffering at The Tough One extreme enduro. This is simply an observation and by no means a criticism – in fact, I count myself a fully paid-up member of the sadistic spectator club. It's basic human nature – how else can you explain the success of You've Been Framed? Sure, we all luv the ickie cutie kitten chasing the ball of wool but – be honest now – you really tune in to see the out-of-control skier straddle a sapling and fire his frank n' beans somewhere the sun don't shine (usually around the solar plexus)...

I know many of the crowd at The Tough One also get their masochistic kicks failing to stay on two-wheels themselves so events like this are a sort of weekend off – a chance to enjoy the other side of the coin so to speak. Mind you, having said that, the amount of skinned knuckles, dead-legs and stone-spray injuries the average spectator picks up hauling the extreme warriors up and over even more extreme obstacles disproves that theory to a certain extent. I came away from Nantmawr Quarry with a fair few new bruises – most of them inflicted by DBR's very own Technical Editor and extreme Irishman Geoff Walker who put in a blinding ride on the Christini KTM to narrowly miss out on a top 10 finish in the Pro class.

In the run up to The Tough One we played host to Throttle Entertainment's main man Jeff Pakosta who had flown over from California to film the event for a new DVD he's got in the pipeline. Jeff called into the DBR office en-route to a series of interviews with some of the top British extreme enduro riders and for his troubles got a little more than he bargained for. Strictly in the interests of keeping his stay as extreme as possible Jeff was treated to some extreme drinking (my job) before the following day sampling some extreme driving (Sutty's job). Luckily he survived both experiences and his tale of masochists being watched by sadists should make great viewing when it's released in the summer...

Sean

James Stewart, Christophe Pourcel and Ryan Dungey have all been stand-out stars in AMA SX

© yamaha-racing.com



© Steve Cox



© suzuki-racing.com

NEWSHAWND!

DEPUTY DAWG'S DIRTY DELIVERY OF OFF-ROAD NEWS...

Rumour, rumour, rumour, rumour. Nope, I'm not struggling to spit out the word rheumatism or anything like that but rather mulling over all the 'hot gossip' I've been a hearing of late. With more bull floating around than you'll ever see at your local livestock market some of the whoppers that I've been told are 'definitely true mate' are astounding. Anyway, rather than filling your head with those fictional tales here are a whole heap of tales that are actually as true as the day is long...

There was bad news for Dave Thorpe's CCM team when Ray Rowson snapped his ACL in a training accident. After undergoing reconstructive surgery it's thought that the speedy Shropshireman will miss at least the first half of the 2009 season – get well soon Raymond! The CCM squad will actually start the year two riders light as Kristian Whatley surprisingly parted company with the team just six weeks prior to the start of the British motocross season stating he wished to pursue a different career path.

Heading Stateside and what about Frenchman Christophe Pourcel and his amazing comeback? Less than a year-and-a-half ago the 2006 MX2 world champion was fighting for his life in an Irish hospital but 17 months on and the #377 Kawi rider is back and currently leading the Lites East series

after winning the first round of the championship in Houston. In the Lites West division Suzuki's Ryan Dungey has taken control of the points lead although Jake Weiner's hot on his heels. Defending West Coast champ Jason Lawrence's hopes of repeating are now non-existent as the troubled 21-year-old from New Jersey failed to qualify for the main in Phoenix and was a non-starter in San Fran after falling foul of an AMA rule that states that no pro athlete can compete after being put on an IV drip – which Jason was to help him recover from illness prior to the race in AT&T Park.

In the Supercross class Chad Reed sits on a slender points lead after James Stewart ran riot at rounds two through five – winning the lot – as Reed suffered with poor starts! The series is far from over however and you can definitely expect the Thunder from Down Under to fight back soon rather than later.

Motocross hit the big time again in the land of the free recently when pop star Alecia Moore's ex-husband Cary Hart – who's best known in dirt biking circles for being the first man to land a backflip at the Gravity Games in Y2K – got naked in a People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) advert that sports a thought-provoking 'Ink, Not Mink' message. Maybe it's also a case



Catch Steve Ramon in action at Hawkstone Park



Dougie's been hauling, Carey's been protecting animals and Greeves have been taking the p**s



of 'Ink, Not Pink' n'all? It's not the first time that Cary's posed for PETA adverts though as he's previously appeared alongside the message 'chains are for bikes not dogs'. Check out www.peta2.com to see more anti-animal-cruelty adverts featuring famous folk.

On this side of the Atlantic, British bike manufacturer Greeves launched an all-new trials prototype at Wrihty's Telford show this month and far from being a classic looking feet-up weapon to wet the whistles of trials enthusiasts everywhere it kinda looked like an Evel Knievel edition Sherco/Xispa instead. The Greeves will be on sale some time soon with a retail price of £5,300 including VAT. There's more good news for Evel Knievel/Greeves fans as rumour has it that the Greeves X-1 Sky Cycle will be hitting showroom floors just in time for next Christmas so you too can half-heartedly shoot someone into the depths of the Grand Canyon blaming a parachute malfunction.

In less ridiculous news from the feet-up world, 12-time world trials champion Dougie Lampkin has had a chuffing great month with awesome results in his new found hobby – enduro! Fourth place overall in the Genoa Indoor as well fourth in the UK's #1 extreme event – The Tough One – prove that Dougie's more than just a legend on a trials bike. The ever professional factory Beta star also appeared on Channel Five's Fifth Gear TV programme teaching the titillating Vicki Butler-Henderson how to do skids, wheelies and look good in lycra. To see the clip yourself log on to <http://fifthgear.five.tv/> and then type 'Dougie Lampkin' into the search facility.

Also making a stunning TV appearance this month was 14-year-old Bradley Pocock who scored a three-minute slot on BBC news prior to the Future West-promoted O2 Arena supercross. The colour piece certainly did no harm as the UTAG Yamaha-sponsored nipper presented off-road sport well on the telly and attendance figures for Saturday night's awesome end to the British SX championship were way up on last year! Bradley's UTAG team-mate Zach Osborne did an international double inside the Millennium Dome taking both the SX1 and SX2 class wins while Neville Bradshaw won the British final. However, neither rider scored a series win as Mike Brown claimed both international titles while MVR-D Suzuki's Carl Nunn won the British.

One of the funniest things I've heard this month comes from the world of enduro where the infamous Snowrun event was cancelled because there was too much snow! The Snowrun wasn't the only event to be hit as many a club and national event was also called off due to the inclement weather.

One man who'll be hoping the weather clears up relatively quickly will be RHL's Gareth Hockey who's throwing a party over the Easter weekend – April 10, 11 and 12 – at Hawkstone Park in Shropshire and everyone's invited! Cunningly called the

Handlebar Festival, Gareth's big event will feature BMX, mountain bikes, FMX, minibikes and of course motocross too as the three-day event will culminate with the running of the opening rounds of the world MX3 and European MX2 championships. With a whole heap of British wildcards entered it's not unfeasible that we could see a British winner in both classes as GP motocross finally returns to Hawkstone Park – woohoo! To pre-book tickets or grab more information on this event head online to www.handlebarfestival.com.

Before that though comes the Hawkstone International on March 1 which is shaping up to be another pre-season classic. With MX1 entries confirmed from Teka Suzuki's Steve Ramon and

Ken de Dycker, Martin Honda's Kevin Stribbos and Marc de Reuver as well as CAS Honda's Cedric Melotte and the reigning British MX1 champion Billy MacKenzie, you just know that it's gonna be a barn-stormer – and that's before you take into account the MX2 class that will no doubt feature an epic scrap between British KTM pilots Stephen Sword and Shaun Simpson.

That battle should continue one week later as well – March 8 – in Kent as the Maxxis British championship kicks off at the infamously technical Canada Heights circuit that's situated slap bang on the M25/A20 interchange near Swanley. There's a proper preview of that series over the page so crack right on and check it out!



WHERE'S CYRIL?

FIND DESPRES AND WIN A SHARK LID

This month thanks to our bezzie mates at Nevis Marketing we've got another top-of-the-range Shark SXR Cyril Despres replica skid lid worth a whole £229.99 to give away.

Somewhere within the pages of this very issue we've superimposed the Dakar Rally hero's disembodied noggin onto an innocent bystander. If you can spot it (and no Einstein, not the one on this page) then you could win the helmet – simple, eh?

All you have to do is locate Cyril's swede and then text the word **DBRCYRIL** followed by a space, the page number, another space and then your name and postcode to **81800**. You'll receive a text back confirming your entry to this competition.*

Entries close on **March 12** with the first correct entry chosen at random getting the lid...

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GOLDENPAD

WIN A PAIR OF RENTHAL HANDLEBARS

Renthal, as everyone knows, builds champions – and now one lucky reader can have a piece of this winning heritage with our great new competition.

Have a close look at our pic of this golden Renthal bar pad, then flick through this month's mag and find the full pic we've taken it from. Once you've found it simply text the word **DBRRENT** followed by a space, the page number it appears on, another space and then your name and postcode to **81800**. You'll receive a text back confirming your entry to this competition.*

Entries close on **March 12** with the first correct entry chosen at random getting a pair of Renthal handlebars of their choice...



Shaun Simpson will defend his MX2 title on a factory KTM

© Edmunds J. KTM Images



The legendary Foxhill is on the calendar again



Mel Pocock leads the UTAG Yamaha assault on the MX2 class

DATES AND PLACES

THE 2009 SERIES SCHEDULE...

Round 1	Canada Heights, Kent	March 8
Round 2	Langrish, Hampshire	March 22
Round 3	Brampton, Cumbria	May 3
Round 4	Hawkstone Park, Shropshire	June 14
Round 5	Lyng, Norfolk	July 12
Round 6	Foxhill, Wiltshire	July 26
Round 7	Duns, Scotland	August 23
Round 8	Landrake, Cornwall	September 27

BATTLE STATIONS!

GET YOUR GROOVE ON BECAUSE THE MAXXIS BRITISH MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP IS JUST ABOUT SET TO LEAVE THE GATE...

Believe it or not in less than one month's time the UK's premier motocross championship returns with a bang. There are no fewer than three championships – MX1, MX2 and MX2Y – to be decided this summer so let's waste no time in taking a look at some of the fancied runners and the eight chosen venues.

In MX1 it's UTAG Yamaha's Zach Osborne who has to be considered favourite to take the title in the absence of reigning champion Billy MacKenzie who is still yet to confirm his participation in this year's Maxxis series. Other strong performers expected to do well in the MX1 class include Samsung Yamaha's Mark Jones, MVR-D Suzuki teamsters James Noble and Carl Nunn, CCM's throttle happy trio of Tom Church, Jason Dougan and Ray Rowson – when he returns from injury of course – as well as PAR Honda's wild pairing of Brad Anderson and Gordon Crookard.

And there are a whole heap of dark horses too including Jordan Rose, Mark Eastwood, Lewis Gregory, Jamie Law, Bryan MacKenzie, Kristian Whatley, Alex Snow, Stuart Flockhart and Glen Phillips who are all more than ready to challenge for top five positions if everything goes well for them on the day! For sure it's going to be an epic series and we think it's wise to expect the unexpected – also don't be too surprised if a forgotten former champion takes the title when the points are added up after the final round in Cornwall.

With UTAG Yamaha placing their hardest hitter in the MX1 division and the absence of both the Molson Kawasaki and Swift Suzuki teams it's not unlikely that KTM riders will be able to dominate this year's MX2 championship. It seems likely that an all-out war will develop between defending champ Shaun Simpson who makes his debut for the full-factory team and KTM UK's Stephen Sword who'll be looking to take his fourth British championship title. Mounted on pretty much evenly matched machinery, expect the 2009 title chase to be equally if not more intense than last year's scrap which saw the title decided in the very final moto.

But who else should we be keeping an eye on in the MX2 series? Third in last year's championship was Martin Barr who in 2009 lines up on a Relentless Suzuki. However, a pre-season elbow injury might just mean that Martin comes out of the traps at less than full throttle – only time will tell on that one.

Neville Bradshaw has found a real home with the Northamptonshire-based DB Racing team and the South African who finished fourth in '08 looks sharper than ever on the super-torquey Evo-Tech-tuned Honda in pre-season testing. Another Honda-mounted challenger for a podium place in '09 will be Frenchman Pascal Leuret who's back in the UK but this time with the all-new Mick Aldous Racing team.

Reigning MMX champ Wayne Smith makes a

brave return to MX2 competition on the Samsung Yamaha after two glorious years in MX1 with Roy Emberson's team – could '09 be the year that Smith finally snatches a Maxxis title?

It's worth remembering that the MX2 class is perennially packed with talented young guns and a few to watch out for this season will be LPE Kawasaki's Elliot Banks-Browne who'll be feeling frisky and free of family pressure this year, world youth champion Matiss Karro who debuts in the UK for the MVR-D outfit, UTAG Yamaha's Mel Pocock who's said to be hauling ass Stateside right now and let's not forget the Reverend Jake Nicholls who at 18 years of age is maturing into a very tidy prospect indeed!

The tracks for this year's series are a familiar bunch with only Duns in Scotland making its debut on the Maxxis calendar. Starting in the south with two rounds in March – Canada Heights and Langrish – the series then heads north to Brampton for round three in May. Hawkstone hosts round four in June before the series slingshots east to Lyng in July for round five. July also sees the second return to Foxhill before the season ends with races in Duns in Scotland on the August Bank Holiday weekend and Landrake – which has previously hosted some classic British championship action – late in September! For more information on this log on to the official website of the Maxxis British Motocross Championship – www.mxgb.info

Hawkstone Park is a firm favourite among racers and fans



SUPPORTFIGHTS!

THE YOUNG GUNS ARE BACK TO DO BATTLE FOR PRIDE, POINTS AND PRIZES...

The ever popular MX2Y series for young guns returns in '09 with four rounds for the 15 to 18-year-old nippers on 125cc two-stroke and 250cc four-stroke machines. The venues for this year's four-round mini adventure are Langrish, Brampton, Hawkstone and Foxhill which of course means that there are two on hardpack and two in sand which should put everyone on an equal footing – except the grass track specialists, hmmm.

On paper the '09 series looks like it's gonna be fought out between PAR Honda's Luke Hawkins, Danger UK's Josh Waterman and the might of Team Green Kawasaki who have Scot James and Connor Walkley fighting their corner. Other title contenders include MX2Y moto winner Lewis Abbott and two riders who haven't registered yet but are sure to book-in sooner rather than later – UTAG Yamaha's rookie signing Bradley Pocock and Redline KTM's Josh Spinks. If previous years' series are anything to go by then this support class should offer some awesome bar-to-bar battles as the British champions of tomorrow battle it out today!



CUTTINGEDGE!

BELIEVE IT OR NOT THIS TECHNICAL TIME-SAVING BEAUTY HERALDS FROM THE LAND OF SCRUMPY JACK AND SCHOOL DODGERS – SOMERSET

Words and photo by JP O'Connell

Fresh from the lathe is Talon Engineering's take on a no hassle pre-load adjuster. We've all been there – at least anyone who has ever adjusted their suspension has been – knocking 10 barrels of s**t out of the pre-load locking ring with a long screwdriver and a big hammer while swearing profusely at the idiot designer who put the exhaust and frame in the way! This product from Talon gets around all that with the design being simplicity itself.

Made out of 7075 hard anodised aluminium, the adjuster has four pre-determined settings, each being the equivalent of a 360 degree turn of the locking ring allowing in total between 10-12mm of adjustment in the ride height.

To change the pre-load you simply put the supplied adjusting bar into one of the pre-drilled holes and push or pull the collar – depending on the result you desire – by about 30mm and all without having to half-dismantle your steed. The beauty of this design is that there are next to no working parts meaning less to go wrong and it's simple and very quick to use.

With the patent now in place production will begin immediately with most modern motocross and enduro bikes being catered for. Expect a price tag of approx £125. For more information contact Talon Engineering on 01935 471508.

BRITSCLEANUP!

MUC-OFF STAY WITH TLD

It's always good to see a company from over here making waves over there and bike cleaner gurus Muc-Off are doing exactly that – big, foamy, grime-fighting waves!

Last year the Dorset-based dirt-dissers teamed up with the Troy Lee Designs SX and SM teams and it's a relationship that's going strong into the 2009 season as they continue their role as technical sponsors.

"It was great to be a part of the Troy Lee team last year so to be working closely with the team for a second year running is fantastic," reckons Muc-Off's Alex Trimmell. "It's vital for us to have our products tested in every conceivable condition so working with teams like Troy Lee helps to ensure our products are always tested on the limit."

TLD Team Manager David Pingree's happy to have them back on board. "Working with the guys at Muc-Off is a big help for everyone in the team, from the mechanics cleaning bikes through to the riders keeping their helmets and goggles in first class condition. In short they help us look good out there!"



GORDON CROCKARD

NEW ORDER!

NEW BIKE, NEW BOOTS, NEW LID, NEW KIT – THERE'S A WHOLE LOT OF NEWNESS GOING ON IN THE WORLD OF OUR MAN FROM NEWTOWNARDS

Words by Gordon Crockard Photo by Suttly

Well, well, well – so I'm still alive! Most of me anyway, just my shoulder is a little dead after I slammed myself into the ground at the O2 Arena in London during the supercross I did at the weekend.

I just watched the crash on Eurosport and I was totally unlucky to be taken out as I was but very lucky not to have had my head removed from its usual location as the dudes close behind me almost used my head as a braking bump. I had to finish in front of Nunny to win the British SX championship and after that incident I had little chance of that happening. So I'm not the champ this time. Boo hoo.

My ass hadn't sat on a bike since the Sheffield SX last October and I went to the Liverpool SX relying on my sometimes questionable memory to get me through the two nights of racing competitively and safely. Throw into the mix the additional factor of not ever having a spin on one of the new Honda CRF450s that I was using as my weapon of choice. I also had changed boot sponsors and so had no other choice but to run absolutely brand new Gaerne SG12s plus new Fox gear, new Airoh helmet and new Oakley goggles. Honestly, everything I used was straight from a packet – bike included. I joked that I was like a mannequin from the Stoneleigh Dirt Bike Show.

It all worked out well and I had surprisingly good pace and put in some decent results considering how hard I made it for myself.

I must confess to doing a little sight-seeing while I was in Liverpool. You see there were two nights racing and after the first night I met up with the original 'Bad Boy Club' (by accident) and this resulted in a tour of the city for a look around many of the fine qualities it has to offer. It was powerful craic and worth the sleep deprivation that came with the tour. I did question my confidence though when I came out of the last attraction and the sun was coming up. So I was quickly back to the hotel for a bit of kip before having to be back on the bike for lunchtime. I managed okay and actually had better results on the second night, winning the British Open final being the highlight.

After the Liverpool SX I brought the bike I rode home with me and I can now get cracking

in the workshop and get her in shape for some testing and practice for the fast approaching season. The weather is brutal here in Northern Ireland and I will get out when I can. Physical training is my main contribution to my results at the moment and when the weather picks up I will get tore into track time. February 22 is my first event and it's flat-out from that weekend on.

I have had soooo many activities this past while. The wild wind ripped two of my biggest trees out of the ground in my garden so a day on the chainsaw put that right (go on – Husqvarna jokes welcome!) – it was mint upper body training too. I felt like Hakan Carlqvist! My two donkeys needed their feet doing badly, so an hour of full-on WWF wrestling in the stable with them and the blacksmith was another case of creative training. I felt like Rocky chasing the chickens for Mickey. I also did an XC mountain bike race for a spot of competitive training.

I attended the Irish Racer awards and was able to convince my Da to join me at the Velux table we were kindly invited to by Paul Lindsay and his father. I was a tad nervous about how my Da would behave on the night as he is, well, unique! I was very impressed with him and proud to introduce him to many of the industry people who attended the awards. He sure had me in fits of laughter and I was unfuelled.

So everyone is skint, everyone is cold and everyone is jumping on the bandwagon and using the recession as an excuse to be tight and negative. I am sick of it. So much nonsense brought on by the media that has made everyone panic and stop living loosely and confidently.

The statement of 'money doesn't make you happy' is debatable. The truth of it is that it depends on how much money you first have. If you have absolutely no money and can't buy a suit to go to job interviews then I would say that some money would make you happy. As you could go get a suit and go get a job.

Money brings opportunity. Opportunity to do many things that could make you happy. So come on people – dry your eyes, get over it, be happy!

Handwritten signature of Gordon Crockard
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WIN! WIN! WIN!

KNIGHTER'S MOOSE KIT UP FOR GRABS

He's one of the greatest off-road racers Britain's ever produced and after back-to-back GNCC titles Stateside new BMW factory pilot David Knight's back in Europe and gunning for his third WEC crown. Hurrah!

And to celebrate this fact we've got a set of the great man's soiled Moose Racewear riding kit – that's jersey and jeans – to give away this month. Hurrah! Hurrah! To be in with a chance of winning all you need to do is let us know the name of the island the George Formby-loving legend comes from.

Is it:

- A) Isle of Man
- B) Isle of Wight
- C) Isle of Dogs
- D) Isle of Skye
- E) Isle of Tarah

Think you know the answer? Okay, now text the word **DBRDK** followed by a space, your answer (either A, B, C, D or E), another space and then your name and postcode to **81800**. You'll receive a text back confirming your entry to this competition.*

Entries close at noon on **March 12** with the first correct answer drawn totally at random after this date getting the swag.

EDITOR

Sean Lawless
sean.lawless@dirtbikerider.co.uk
Tel: 01524 834077
Fax: 01524 425469

DEPUTY DAWG

Anthony Sutton
anthony.sutton@dirtbikerider.co.uk

ART EDITOR

Andrew Marginson
andrew.marginson@dirtbikerider.co.uk

DESIGN

Graham Austin
Gary Houghrain

US EDITOR

Steve Cox
www.coxmx.com

TECHNICAL EDITOR

Geoff Walker
geoffwalkerdb@aol.com

YOUTH EDITOR

Mike Gurney
mikegurney55@yahoo.co.uk

CONTRIBUTORS

Jonty Edmunds, Stevie Mills, Roger Harvey, Stephen Sword, Gordon Crockard, Billy MacKenzie, Tony Marshall, Jack Burnicle, Neil Drew, Steve Matthes, JP O'Connell, Max Anstie, Ray Archer

NEW MEDIA MANAGER

Jude Oakley

CLASSIFIED ORIGINATION

Stuart Box, Richard Harrison and David Chu

COMMERCIAL MANAGER

Debs Stuchbury
debs.stuchbury@dirtbikerider.co.uk
01524 834007

MARKETING AND CIRCULATION MANAGER

Richard Wilkinson
richard.wilkinson@dirtbikerider.co.uk
01524 834013

ADVERTISING

Phil Armitage
phil.armitage@dirtbikerider.co.uk
01524 834012

ADMIN MANAGER

Sarah Hodgkinson

MERCHANDISING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Anne Pardula
www.dirtbikerider.co.uk
01524 834066

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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STEPHEN SWORD

TRAINING CAMP!

SWORDY'S JUST BACK FROM 11 DAYS IN SPAIN AS PART OF KTM'S PRE-SEASON RIDING AND TESTING PROGRAMME

Words by Stephen Sword Photo by rayarcher.com

It's been pretty much the same old same old this month so basically training, riding and then more training, riding. All good though. It was my birthday last month so that was cool and Jodie's family came over to celebrate with me. We also went out with TC, his girlfriend Claire, Pecker and Hannah as it was his birthday a few days before mine.

Talking of Pecker, the poor old boy done himself in the other week. It was at Huck's stubble field GP. He broke his upper arm and socket joint in his shoulder in what let's just say was a coming together! Hang in there dude – it won't be long before you're as good as new again and you must be getting skilled at wiping your ass with your left hand!

I got some good riding in before I left for Spain on January 24 but I was looking forward to going as the weather was not being that kind to us in England. I was invited down by KTM to take part in their pre-season riding and testing programme – Harry Everts also had his training camp down there but Stefan took care of our group. I flew down to Valencia and the landing was one of the worst I have ever experienced. It was so windy that the plane was swapping from side to side. I felt sick as anything. We eventually got off the plane, me looking as white as a ghost and feeling ill. However, the lovely warm sun soon made me feel better.

As I was picking up my hire car I saw Stefan and the rest of the KTM boys – perfect timing! So I followed them to the hotel. As soon as they got into the hire car it was handbrake skids pretty much all the way to the hotel which set the standard for the rest of the trip which was such good fun. On arrival it was just a case of settling in our rooms. I was sharing with my mechanic Wayne who was already there after a long drive down with the bikes and I went cycling that evening just to loosen up my legs after the travelling.

The next two days we rode the bikes, just getting things set up and getting use to some hardpack tracks again. We would ride for two days and then have one day off on which we would go cycling and swim. The cycling was really good with nice roads and mountains to cycle up and of course nice weather. On some of the riding days we would have races out of the startgates. There were about 20 of us so it was good fun and everyone got their race head

on including Stefan who let me tell you can still ride smooth and fast.

Each day would be something different so you never got bored and we only went back to the same track once in the whole time there. Part of the deal was your room with all your food included. Breakfast then dinner was a help-yourself buffet and for lunch they would make you up a little picnic. Sounds good but after 11 days I wanted some home-cooked food so I've told Jodie to get the roast dinner ready!

Harry and Stefan have been doing this camp for over 10 years now. It is well organised and best of all you get good riding in. As the weather's been so bad in the UK with the snow and stuff I was definitely in the right place. I'm still getting used to the KTM – it rides much different to the Kawasaki in the way that it handles. I have another test to do when the mechanics get back to Holland, then we will have the full race engine to try. I have been practising on a stock bike so far which is pretty good but I can't wait to try the race one! Everything is heading in the right direction and I'm feeling fit.

I managed to squeeze a few extra days out of this month's column deadline as I wanted to write about my trip to Spain and I'm writing this on my flight back to Gatwick after a two-hour delay at Valencia. Hammering away at my laptop keys is helping to pass the time though and I only have 20 minutes before I land so I'm trying to get it done. I'm getting a bit distracted with the guy in front though – he stinks – so I may have to get my travel-sized Lynx out and give him a good spray. And Jake's just started snoring next to me – I think he's caught that from his mechanic Mick who he's been sharing a room with for the last week.

The captain's just informed us that we're approaching Gatwick and that the temperature is two degrees – how depressing – but on the plus side I'm going to have lovely Jodie and her big bump waiting there for me. I should notice a big difference as it's been two weeks since I last saw her. She's just over seven months pregnant now so not long to go.

Okay, the seat belt signs are now on and we're about to land so I'm going to sign off. Take care and see ya at the races!

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THE SPONSOR

IN THESE FICKLE FINANCIAL TIMES A GOOD SPONSOR CAN BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RACING AND SPECTATING SO THIS MONTH WE'VE HOOKED UP WITH SOMEONE NOT AFRAID TO PUT HIS MONEY WHERE HIS MOUTH IS – TALON ENGINEERING'S ROB SARTIN

Words and photos by JP O'Connell

With the world economy in freefall the effects are probably touching all of us in some way, shape or form – my '04 CRF for instance is now used as a clothes horse rather than being given away on the second-hand market!

With this in mind we should all be eternally grateful to the firms, businesses and manufacturers who step up and inject much needed cash into our sport. With the list of potential interviewees being quite long, the runes were tossed and Talon popped to the top – handy that they're only 500 yards from my front door...

DBR: Introduce yourself Rob...

RS: "My name is Rob Sartin and I am the Managing Director of Talon Engineering. My role before that was in R&D which I am still continuing to do now – I've recently been working on new footrests and a pre-load adjuster."

DBR: Tell us a bit about your off-road background.

RS: "I was British enduro champion in '95 and '97 as well as finishing fifth in the WEC 250 class in '96. I only ride every now and then these days, mostly testing and setting up for some of the guys."

DBR: How long has Talon been in business?

RS: "My parents – George and Veronica – started the business in 1973 so we've been around for about 35 years now."

DBR: What products do you supply and how many people does Talon employ?

RS: "We employ 45 staff manufacturing hubs, spokes, sprockets and footrests as well as importing Excel rims, Braking wavy discs and RK chains. Bikes make up around 60 per cent of our work with outside contracts making up the other 40 per cent."

DBR: Which teams currently use Talon?

RS: "Our main sponsored team this year will be CCM who will be using our wheels, sprockets, chains etc. As well as CCM there are several other teams who will be using our products in various sponsorship packages including Roy Emberson's Pioneer Yamaha squad, Steve Dixon's UTAG Yamaha squad, Rob Hooper's Relentless Suzuki squad, DB Racing and STR Honda."

DBR: Do any of the factories use Talon equipment?

RS: "We supply the KTM world factory and KTM US factory teams with wheels. In return for supplying the wheels we are then allowed to name drop that we supply KTM – we don't even get a sticker on the bike!"

DBR: Do any riders have personal deals with you?

RS: "We will try to stick with teams as opposed to individuals. If we were to sponsor one rider and he was injured at the beginning of the season we would be in trouble."

DBR: As well as teams and riders do you also sponsor any of the motocross race series?

RS: "We don't purely because we do so many of the teams that we don't necessarily feel we have to or need to."

DBR: You provided a support team at last season's British championship rounds. Will it be carrying on in '09?

RS: "The service truck was very successful and Dave Wells will be taking it to all of the British rounds again this season. Dave has worked for a lot of the top guys so he knows and gets on well with most of the people in the paddock. The truck is also invaluable in providing Talon with a public presence at the meetings. As well as the motocross I personally take the truck to the British enduro rounds to make sure we get our name out there as much as possible."

DBR: Are you able/willing to give us a figure on your sponsorship budget?

RS: "Sponsorship, advertising and shows all come out of the same budget which is in the region of £150,000."

DBR: Do you think you get a better return from sponsorship as opposed to traditional advertising?

RS: "I think for us it needs to be split into three categories – sponsorship, advertising (magazines etc) plus the meeting and greeting people at the shows and with the service truck. Of those I would be most loathe giving up the meeting and greeting side of things. What you gain by being at the races and involved with the teams is knowledge of the product, the direction in which the sport is moving and the fact that every person there is a potential customer."

DBR: Have you any way of measuring its return/success?

RS: "I think it's nearly impossible to know how well your sponsorship/advertising is doing for you. Saying that we would never stop doing it!"

DBR: Do you get many requests from the next Carmichael/Everts/Stewart for support?

RS: "Yes, of course we get little Johnny who's just won his club championship contacting us and we do try to answer every letter that we receive, even if it's a polite 'sorry we have no budget'. There are a lot of those little Johnnys out there but then 10-15 years ago Tommy Searle was one of them so we do try to put together some support packages for people who stand out for whatever reason."

DBR: Is Talon's success confined to Europe or are you big news in the States as well?

RS: "We have a US importer but we are far from having 'cracked the States'. We were with White Bros for 12 years but they have now folded and we have gone with a company called QTM who are our sole US distributor. Things are starting to drop into place so hopefully our exposure in America will get bigger and bigger."

DBR: Is Talon used by any of the major manufacturers as OEM equipment.

RS: "At the moment we are used by some of the trials manufacturers – Sherco, Scorpa and Gas Gas including Gas Gas enduro bikes."

DBR: How many world championships have been won on Talon wheels?

RS: "We lost count once it got over the 100 mark! Obviously, our latest one was with Tyla Rattray in the world MX2 championship."

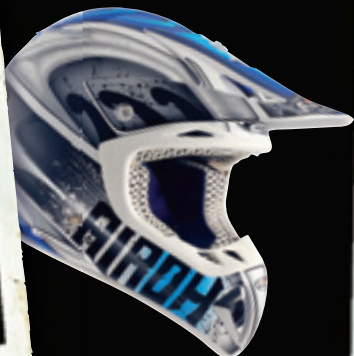
DBR: Another British firm 'done good' in motocross are obviously Renthal – is the dream to be as big as they are?

RS: "I've got no ambitions to be another Renthal. We get on well with the people there – they've got a good product and service and it's really nice to see a UK-based company with a UK-manufactured product which is worldwide. If we can follow along on their shirt tails and be something like them then I think that would be a huge compliment to us. People will go into a shop and ask for a pair of Renthals when they want bars, hopefully people will ask specifically for a pair of Talons when they want wheels."

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GOAT FIGHT!

goato o goato

RICKY CARMICHAEL TAKES ON STEFAN EVERTS TO SEE WHICH RIDER REALLY IS THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME...

Words by JP O'Connell

With 10 major motocross championships and 100-plus top-flight victories apiece, Ricky Carmichael and Stefan Everts are arguably the greatest two riders in the history of MX. Opinions on just exactly who is the GOAT tend to depend on what side of the Atlantic you call home so we thought we'd man-test them to come to a conclusive, er, conclusion...

DBR: Who would play you in a film of your life?
RC: "I'm a Edward Norton fan so probably him."
SE: "Steve McQueen I think."

DBR: When did you last clean an air filter?
RC: "It's sad to say that I really can't remember when I actually cleaned one but I am good for putting on one that has been cleaned and oiled already – at least one or two a year."
SE: "Aaaaahhhh that's a long time ago! We had a riding school in Spain back in January ('08) and some needed doing then."

DBR: Can you check your own valve clearances?
RC: "Actually, I can do that surprisingly. I have seen it done so much."
SE: "No, definitely not."

DBR: Ever eaten anything you've killed?
RC: "Hopefully I'm not offending anyone but, yes, I have."
SE: "That I have killed myself? Ummmm, no!"

DBR: How many bones have you broken?
RC: "I have only broken three bones."
SE: "Quite a few – collarbone, shoulder, two in my hands. About seven in total."

DBR: How many and where are your tattoos?
RC: "I have no tats at all."
SE: "I have one on my right leg just above my ankle. It's a little mascot that was designed by Troy Lee for me – I like the Tasmanian Devil so it's based on that. I have run the design on my helmet and fans of mine have it on t-shirts and banners...in fact some have the same tattoo!"

DBR: It's the last lap, you're in second and right on the leader's rear wheel. Do you take him out in the last corner for the win?
RC: "Well, it depends who it is and if I can get by the person without doing it."
SE: "It's not always necessary to take someone out – there is always a way to not take someone out and still win. You can always just push someone wide so they don't crash, that way you stay sporting and you're still 'the man'."

DBR: What car do you drive?
RC: "A Suzuki XL7 and a Mercedes GL550."
SE: "At the moment we have a Mercedes ML320, a Mercedes 320R and a van which I drive the most – I throw all my sh*t in and fly all over the place in it!"

DBR: And if money was no object...
RC: "A Mercedes CLS65 I think."
SE: "I've always liked the Porsche GTR series but I think for me it would be the Aston Martin Vanquish, that car has real class."

DBR: What is your favourite food?
RC: "I don't have a favourite as I really enjoy all different types of food. The same kind would get boring!"
SE: "I have a few different favourite foods. I like Chinese, Japanese and Italian, they would be my top three – oh and of course homemade Belgian fries, no mayo!"

DBR: Have you ever been arrested and why?
RC: "Not that I am aware of!"
SE: "No, I've never been in jail or been arrested!"

DBR: If you weren't a motocrosser...
RC: "I would like to say a baseball player, that's what I really enjoyed when I was younger."
SE: "Definitely a drummer for a big band. Music is my second passion."

DBR: Which is your favourite motocross track?
RC: "Red Bud, Millville and Mt Morris."
SE: "Foxhill, Namur and Leirop or Lommel."

DBR: What's your ideal holiday?
RC: "At my beach house on a clear hot summer weekend or Aspen during the winter."
SE: "I like a nice hot beach where I can go scuba diving, somewhere like the Maldives where we've been for the last two years. As a kid we used to go skiing so we are planning to do that this year."

DBR: What's the most embarrassing thing you've done while drunk?
RC: "[Laughing] I don't think anything is embarrassing when you are drinking!"
SE: "I did a striptease at my sixth championship party to You can Leave Your Hat On!"

DBR: What is your favourite band?
RC: "I'm a huge fan of all genres of music so I can't really say that I have one favourite band."
SE: "My all-time favourite band are Faith No More, they were a big band in the '90s."

DBR: What's your favourite film?
RC: "I like old movies like Back to School with Rodney Dangerfield but something current would be Gladiator."
SE: "As Good as it Gets with Jack Nicholson."

DBR: Do you have any fears or phobias?
RC: "A huge phobia of mine are all kinds of reptiles. I have many fears, mainly anything bad that could happen to my kids or family."
SE: "I have a fear of heights but I have almost overcome it by rock climbing in Monaco."

DBR: What's the most embarrassing article of clothing you've owned/own?
RC: "I think the most embarrassing piece of clothing I have owned is probably back when my mother used to dress me."
SE: "I have loads of those! I had a bit of a moment for a couple of years where I was into really loud colours and big shirts!"

DBR: Can you cook?
RC: "Yes, I can cook actually – my best dish would be ground turkey mixed with peppers and onions sautéed in tomato sauce over brown rice."
SE: "I can cook a little. I'm pretty good at salads and I cook scampi and tomato with pasta."

DBR: What's your most prized possession?
RC: "My kids and wife, hands down."
SE: "My family."

DBR: Favourite race you've been in?
RC: "I have had so many great races and have raced so many great racers but the best are probably the ones with James Stewart."
SE: "I have had lots of great moments and I must mention two of them. In the rain in '05 at Namur nobody could pass but I found this great spot on a downhill jump where I passed a man a lap and went from eighth to first! The other was in Austria in '02 when I was second behind Yves Demaria for the whole race, I passed him in the last turn to take the win."

DBR: How fast can you down a pint?
RC: "Good question, I have never tried it. I will next time I crack one open!"
SE: "I don't drink pints as I end up having to p**s too often!"



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SADDLE-HOPPING!

MERTON TO MOTO-ONE, BIRD TO WATT KTM AND YOUNG EDWARD ALLINGHAM TO MISSISSIPPI – IS NO-ONE STAYING PUT IN IRELAND?

Words by **Stevie Mills** Photo by **Sutty**

What a crazy start to '09! Before a throttle has even been twisted in earnest there's been more saddle-hopping than in the entire run of Champion the Wonder Horse!

Phil McCullough's Moto-One Team are back on track with the surprise signing of triple Ulster champion Tommy Merton who had a 'done deal' with Watt Motorcycles.

Tommy spoke to Blarney about his 11th hour dilemma. "It was completely out of the blue – Phil offered me a chance to compete in a full season of British championship MX1 which is something at this stage of my career I could not turn down. Norman and Ricky Watt have been good to me and I was set to ride their bike at home this season but I feel that with Moto-One I can be competitive in the British championships and perhaps win another Ulster championship along the way."

Merton will partner up with Robert Hamilton who will ride MX2 in the British series and both riders have been hard at work preparing for what promises to be an explosive season.

They say every cloud has a silver lining and it came to Richard Bird in the form of a phonecall from Richard Watt who offered him a test run on the new 250 and 450 KTMs. A day testing at the Blaris practice track proved to be successful and an agreement was reached that will see Richard race for Watt Motorcycles KTM in the 2009 Ulster and Irish MX1 and MX2 series.

Richard has continued to improve year on year in the Premier class and finished a fine third in the MX1 Irish championship in 2008. The Watt KTM deal will also include Fox racewear and alongside his loyal band of sponsors Richard has secured sponsorship from Polisport, Pro-Clean, Rip N Roll and Fro-Systems via GOMX Distribution.

Steve Dixon amicably released Edward Allingham from his 2009 deal to race under his UTAG Yamaha awning in order for the promising youngster to take up a 'chance of a lifetime' opportunity to live and train with an ex-world champion in the USA. Edward has agreed a deal that will see him ride Kawasaki machinery for one of the biggest off-road dealers in Mississippi while living and training with the legend that is Trampas Parker!

It's a realistic possibility that Chad, one of the coolest guys on the planet, will be coming to Ireland this summer to hold some training schools and race a few local events – watch this space!

While Lady Luck was with the Irish contingent at the recent Liverpool Supercross she may well have been in the bar when Martin Barr crashed end over end aboard his Relentless Suzuki. Such was the crash that Barty was indeed blessed to be able to walk away from it although, after further scrutiny, it was discovered that the popular Irishman had indeed chipped a bone in his elbow.

On a brighter note, GC returned to his winning ways to take the British SX final at Liverpool in fine style, enjoying his first blast aboard the all-new Honda 450 on a somewhat tight track. With only Carl Nunn coming between GC and his first British title in a few years, Gordon was looking forward to the final race at London's O2 Arena.

Unfortunately for the Crock Star it didn't quite

go to plan. "Carl cased a jump coming out of the first corner," explains Gordy, "I was fully committed and landed square on top of the back end of his bike. He kept upright and won the title while I wrestled an extremely bent '09 Honda home for fourth on the night and third in the championship." The Dark Destroyer (note to GC, seek a new colour stylist) was pretty pleased with both his fitness and the handling ability of his new steed and is looking forward to a busy schedule which will include British MX1, MMX, DEP and KWS series with as many Ulster championship rounds as possible thrown in just for good measure.

Rising youth star Christy Harnett enjoyed two podium finishes at the Liverpool SX as he beat some of the UK's finest talent on home turf to claim third in this ultra-competitive series. Still only 16 years old, Christy has joined the ranks of the Naas-based TMC MX team this season and rides regularly with Darren Leonard who is training hard in preparation for a shot at the Irish MX2 title.

Jonathan Rea's team rider Tommy Fenwick looked every bit the 'prospect' as I watched him wringing the neck of a new CRF250 around an extremely well rutted Blaris Moto Park. The young Scot was pumping in 30-minute motos without breaking sweat and, according to local spectators, his lap times pretty much ripped up the form book by an amazing three or four seconds. Jonathan has entered Tommy in as many Irish and Ulster rounds as possible which adds further spice to what has already been billed as possibly the toughest domestic season yet!

Anyone who knows him won't be surprised to hear that Harry Corbett – the man with a plan who carved out the only 'pay as you ride' practice facility in Lisburn – is ready for the next step to change motocross. Blarney met with Harry C and his new business partner Nigel Bradley to get the lowdown on his plans for a five-round, £18K-plus prize money bonanza.

The proposed Super Sunday race series will take place at an all-new motocross facility near

the famous Dundrod road circuit with round one scheduled for April 25. Yes, there will be a few people in the 'establishment' not so happy that riders will have another option of where and when they can ride but at the end of the day it's all about the riders...

"For too long the riders in this country have been given a raw deal by people who have no real interest in driving this sport forward," explains Harry. "We will help develop the talented



Christy Harnett shows off polished supercross skills

riders to their full potential while providing a facility where every rider in the country can come and simply enjoy riding their bike with their friends. Our five-round race series this summer will give us a clear view of where we can take this next year, provided the riders of this island support us by racing with us and coming to our open practice days."

Interesting indeed! If you wish to know more about the Super Sunday series call **07746 988671** for details. And if you have any news for Blarney drop me an email to stephendbr@aol.com

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Johnny Aubert's got a new team – and new pressures to deal with – in this year's WEC



CRYSTAL BALLS!

WITH THE OPENING ROUND OF THE '09 WEC NOT TOO FAR AWAY, MYSTIC JONTY CHECKS OUT THE MEN IN FORM...

Words and photo by Jonty Edmunds

If it was possible to look into a crystal ball and learn what the future holds, now is the time most riders would do just that. With training and testing filling each and every week, as the clock ticks down towards the first round of the new season riders from all across Europe are busy readying themselves for the WEC season opener. And just like every year, confidence is mixed with an uneasy air of uncertainty.

For Mika Ahola, Johnny Aubert and Samuli Aro, the coming months are arguably more important than for any other riders. As they equip themselves for the start of yet another WEC season, last year's three world champions know that '09 will be anything but easy for them. Each of the '08 title winners face stiff competition in '09 – competition that will make their competitive lives difficult yet ensure an entertaining and exciting championship.

For the first time ever Mika Ahola starts a WEC season as clear title favourite. The deserved Enduro 1 world championship winner in '08, as a rider that for most of his career was seen as someone that could but probably wouldn't win Mika is now without question the man to beat in '09. Knowing that he is expected to defend his E1 championship isn't likely to affect Mika too much. Not the kind of rider to worry unnecessarily about pre-season expectancy, the long-haired Finn will simply go about his preparations as he always has. Safe in the knowledge that it was his consistency and

speed in all conditions that netted him his second world championship last season, Mika is the proverbial elder statesman of the quarter-litre thumper class.

There are a number of riders Mika will have to keep an eye on but with Ivan Cervantes – his closest rival from '08 – returning to the E3 class this year the number of riders capable of mounting a serious challenge against him are minimal. While many will be out to knock the Honda rider off the top spot only one – newly signed KTM rider Simone Albergoni – stands any real chance of doing that. And only if he raises his game significantly from '08.

Johnny Aubert has a lot of pressure on his shoulders right now. The laidback Frenchman carries the #1 plate into '09 and will need all the speed and consistency he can muster to defend his Enduro 2 title. Winning the '09 E2 title will be anything but easy for the former schoolboy motocross world champ although one rider alone will likely make things difficult for Johnny – and that's Juha Salminen. Just as in '08 when both jostled for the top spot in E2, the two riders won't be happy with anything but the title come the end of the season.

Although the E2 class will again be stacked with talent I can't see many riders likely to be able to split Salminen and Aubert. For Aubert the new season brings with it new machinery and a new team – a first since his move to the WEC three years ago. Salminen too has to adapt to

new machinery and a new team which means that the '09 E2 title fight will be much, much more than just a repeat of last year's championship battle.

The Enduro 3 class enjoyed more depth of talent than any other class in '08 and for '09 it's even stronger – something defending class champion Samuli Aro is all too aware of. Managing to do just enough at the final round of the '08 series to claim the E3 crown after an injury-plagued season, Aro knows that whoever finally wins the '09 E3 championship will certainly have earned it.

With Ivan Cervantes re-joining the class alongside Aro in the KTM team, BMW have David Knight and Marko Tarkkala competing for them which alone will make for one hell of an interesting battle. When you add in the handful of French riders competing in the class – namely Seb Guillaume and Christophe Nambotin – it becomes clear that the E3 title is going to take some winning. And that Aro has one hell of a challenge ahead of him.

Closer to home it's Tom Sagar who has it all to do if he is to win a third consecutive BEC crown. With David Knight set to compete in the full series again for the first time since '06, making it three in a row will be anything but easy for Tom. Add in the likes of Greg Evans, Daryl Bolter, Si Wakely and Paul Edmondson and competition at the sharp end of the BEC could well be as close as it is in the WEC...

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POND LIFE!

I am writing this to you as I stare bewildered at where my pride and joy used to sit patiently until the time came for me to fill her with fuel and set her loose on the mud-filled ruts she loved so much. Alas...

The reason for my broken heart is some dirty, rotten, scumbag, lowlife, bottom feeder, dung beetle, coward paid my CR250F a visit and by cutting an eight foot square hole in the side of my well secured (ha ha) garage separated us for life!

And just when I sense a tear is welling up in your eye, this is not the first time – call it #2 – because just when I was coming to terms with my CRF being taken and buying a replacement, bonding with it, beefing up security (d'oh) it happens again!

I've had the 'okay, that's it, I'm packing it in after 30 years in the sport, selling the van, gear etc' rants but that would be giving up and motocrossers don't give up! So I guess it will be the beefing up, coming to terms, bonding thing all over again!

I guess a bottle of Muc-Off would be futile at the moment?

Ally, Scotland

Mate, that absolutely sucks – we're all gutted for you – but what doesn't suck is your fighting spirit. And we like the fact you're named after one of our favourite frame materials n'all. So you'll have some Muc-Off whether you like it or not and on top of that have a pair of spanking Etnies sneakers too!

GRAPHIC DESIGN

My name is Ian and I am from Edinburgh in Scotland. I really like motorbikes and the graphics in your magazine. I think the magazine is great and looks really cool. The pictures in the magazine are good as well because I made posters out of them and added some of my own graphics too. I hope you like them.

Wee Ian Dee, Edinburgh

Good work Wee Ian – thanks for sharing your posters with us mate...



SPARKED OUT!

I'm just writing to ask if you can tell me where I can get a set of electrics for a 2007 CR125 because I bought this bike brand new and ever since it has not worked properly. It runs but goes through plugs like mad and has a strong spark at the top but a very weak spark at the bottom. My mate's dad is Honda trained and said the 'magic eye' has gone. Is there any way you can help me?

Jodie, Cornwall

This one calls for some Geoff Walker words of wisdom! Over to you Godfrey... "The 'magic eye'? That's a new one on me! The bike needs to run with 125ml of two-stroke oil for every five litres of fuel. And the best plug for the bike is an NGK B8EG. These simple steps should make the bike run well. If you have a spark and your choke is switching off properly you shouldn't have a problem. Make sure the bike is revved out when warmed up a little and if it will not clear check the reed petals and if they are intact drop the main jet down a size."

RUNNING REPAIRS

Please can you help? My son has just got into motocross and has a Kawasaki KX60. We took it out for the first time on Sunday and within minutes he smashed it into a tree. Now I am on the look out for the right-hand engine casing. Can you give me any pointers where to get parts in the Oxford area?

John, via email

Off the top of our heads you could try Cradley Kawasaki on 01384 633455 – they do new and used spares – or Corby Kawasaki on 01536 401010. Both do mail order. Failing that refer to our answer to Kyrrren's letter below and pick up a copy of Trials and Motocross News and check out the Classified section...

WHAT'S ON?

I'll start by saying that this mag is amazing! The girlfriend got me a year's subscription for Christmas – she done well! Anyways, I need your expertise! Is there anywhere I can find a list of all motocross competitions in the UK? I'm a keen motocrosser and want to try different competitions but don't know where to look. I have tried both the AMCA and ACU websites but can't seem to find a thing! Any ideas?

Kyrrren, mid-Wales

This one's a piece of pish Kyrrren – get yourself down to your friendly local newsagent-type emporium and pick up a copy of our sister publication Trials and Motocross News. In the back there's a section called Regulations Available packed full of all the events coming up over the next month or so.

KRIS, BANG, WALLOP!

My name is Kris and I love reading your magazine. I got my first bike last year and started racing after a few times out on it. I'm currently racing whenever I get the chance.

I was racing at Melville motocross track and broke my front brake on my CR125 so I had to use my mate's CR450F for the rest of the day which was pretty scary. I got it fixed for the next meeting on January 18 so I was hoping to have a better day – I was wrong and here is evidence of my crash on the last lap of the first race.

Surprisingly I walked away with just a bad back.

Keep up the good work lads!

Kris, Northumberland

There's no point in doing things by halves Kris – glad you walked away from it in one piece...



© Mike Biagi



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GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

WELL HERE'S WHERE YOU SHOULD BE SAYING IT...

Write to Rant at the usual address or email us at rant@dirtbikerider.co.uk

All letters/emails must be accompanied by a full address.

Oh and please don't send emails all in capitals. Cheers!

LETTERS WIN PRIZES

Write to Rant, get your letter published and you'll win a one-litre trigger bottle of marvellous bike cleaning fluid Muc-Off. And if we rate your letter highly enough you'll also receive our star prize – this month a pair of Etnies Cinch shoes.



HOT RODS

STROKER CRANKSHAFT

"You can beat an egg but you can't beat a nice long stroke." That's what a strange and elderly chap once told me and until I saw this performance enhancing mod on the shelf of my local dirt bike tuner – Hungry Hector's House of Horsepower – I didn't have a clue what he meant.

Long stroke technology is nothing new but in the past it's not only been expensive and time consuming to sort out but also looked damn ugly with nasty spacers ruining the look of your dirt motorcycle's power plant. With this Hot Rods kit from Madison not a soul will know you're enjoying the benefits of a long stroke so you can keep a crafty smile as you sail past your competition at full speed.

Price: £299.99

Supplier: ultimatepursuits.co.uk

Contact: sales@ultimatepursuits.co.uk



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Supplier: foxracing.com

Contact: 0191 487 6100



FOX RACING

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Even the coolest of cats consider wearing chest protection after they've been roasted by a 450 at full chat as nothing stings more than a sharp rock ricocheting off your ribcage. If you want to protect your torso from this kind of abuse then you could do a lot worse than sliding inside one of these Fox Raceframes that come in three sizes and five different colours. Although no chest protector manufacturer can guarantee you'll stay injury free when wearing one of their products this Fox jobbie is one of the best available on the market today and a favourite of the DBR crashing crew!

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Contact: 0191 487 6100



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There's no denying that Leatt-Braces are becoming even more popular than the busty barmaid in your local boozer. So to stop looking like your best brace-wearing buddy don't you think it's time you thought about customising your Leatt so you stand out from the crowd?

Unless you've had your head buried in the sand for the last few years – in which case I hope the Leatt saved your neck – then you'll know that there's a whole heap of customisable graphics kits available for the aforementioned neck-saving product. The latest of these is this rather sexy Factory FX kit that's now available from Madison supplied dealers everywhere...

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Price: Cradle £5.95 Slim £6.95 Rebound £11.95

Supplier: rushracing.co.uk

Contact: 01404 549696

APICO

ENGINE PLUG KIT

If you're fed up with the plastic plugs in your four-popper's engine looking drab then maybe it's time you invested in this engine plug kit from the purveyors of pimping products – A-p-p-p-p-p-pico!

Price: £21.50

Supplier: apico.co.uk

Contact: 08707 779201



ANSWER RACING

ROCKSTAR HELMET

Last year Answer Racing's Rockstar replica race kit sold out quicker than aging punk rocker Johnny Rotten so for 2009 – as well as bringing the popular line of racewear back – Answer have added this awesome helmet to the line-up. Sweeter than the drink itself this sub-£100 Rockstar lid features the kind of build quality and materials you'd expect to find on a product that costs three times as much so snap one up while they're still around because once they're gone they won't be around anymore and that...

Price: £99.99

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Contact: 08707 779201



NO FEAR

SPECTRUM RACEWEAR

No Fear's Spectrum racewear comes in a range of colours that suit every single brand of bike, all the nations from around the world and each type of fashion taste known to man. Built to last and colourfast too these superb dirt biking duds are priced so they won't break the bank either!

Price: Pants £75 Jersey £30

Supplier: nofearmx.com

Contact: 0282 563 2266

APICO

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Although these brake master cylinder covers don't do a thing to enhance the performance of your beast as Windsor Davies would say 'they ain't half hot mum!' Bling bling!

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Supplier: apico.co.uk

Contact: 08707 779201



FRO SYSTEMS

FORK BLEEDERS

Cunningly clever and coloured like the contents of a can of Lucozade, these orange fork bleeders are just the things for people who like to bleed the air from their front forks quickly and efficiently. They're priced to sell too so grab a pair quick before your local dirt bike dealer sells out!

Price: £12

Supplier: frosystems.com

Contact: 01527 850614



ARTRAX

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Contact: 08707 779201



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KNIGHT SCHOOL!

Want to learn how to ride like off-road god David Knight? Yep, thought you might! In that case don't miss next month's DBR because we've teamed up with the Beemer-rippin', George Formby-lovin', hand-draggin' Manx mountain for a masterclass in enduro skills starting exclusively in our April issue...

Photo by Sully





LAST SUPPER!

STEPHEN SWORD KNOWS THE 2009 SEASON WILL BE HIS FINAL CHANCE TO WIN A WORLD MX2 TITLE AND THE STEELY SCOT'S STILL GOT THE HUNGER TO WIN...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by rayarcher.com



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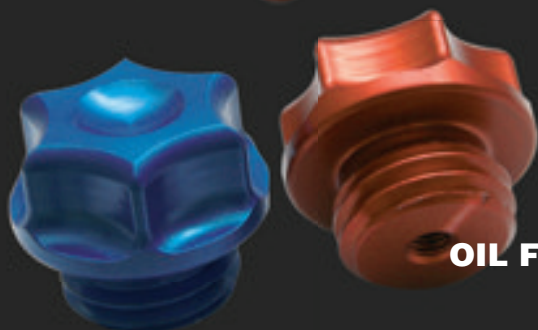
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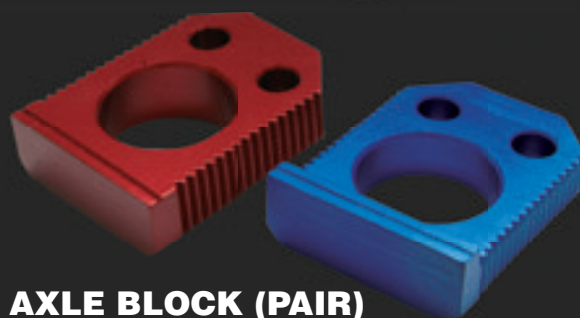
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For 2009 Swordy's gone from green to orange as the main man in the KTM UK team



The last time I interviewed Stephen Swordy was in November 2007. Sat in the kitchen of his new home in Fleet, Hampshire, the Scot was in a positive frame of mind as he contemplated the challenges that lay ahead in '08. Fast forward 14 months and there's a strong sense of déjà vu...

This time around we're sat in his kitchen and Swordy's in a positive frame of mind as he contemplates the challenges that lay ahead in '09. But there are a few notable changes. His kitchen is now 50-odd miles along the M4 on the outskirts of Swindon, his new riding kit is in KTM UK orange rather than Molson Kawasaki green and his girlfriend Jodie Oram is, well, let's just say there's a fair bit more of her...

At 29 years old Swordy's no longer the young blade of British MX although he showed last year he's still every bit as fast and fearless as the

rider who took a hat-trick of British 125cc/MX2 titles, won GPs, led the world and earned a factory Kawasaki ride with Jan De Groot's Motorex team before losing two seasons through injuries – the worst an horrifically broken right ankle and heel that almost ended his career.

On the eve of the 2009 season he's now sizing up his final year in the MX2 division before Youthstream's new age limit comes into effect and looking forward to impending fatherhood (the reason for Jodie's bump and their relocation to the West Country be nearer to her parents).

"I don't feel 29. It's funny but because I had those two bad years it's as though I class myself as 27! It's my last chance because of the age rule coming in but I've still got this drive to win the MX2 championship. Opportunities come up and you have to take them and I believe this year is one for me.

"What age did Dobby win his world championship at? He was 29. All the stars aligned for him that year – it was one race, he was on a great bike, he was fit, his head was in the right place. That year all panned out for him and that's what I've got to look at."

Last season was the first time since the start of '06 that Swordy went into a championship campaign anywhere near to being fighting fit and despite a mid-season shoulder injury he narrowly missed regaining the British MX2 crown and ended the world series ninth with a podium finish in Spain. It was always going to be a year of development with Molson Kawasaki but then all the hard work went tits-up with the news that Mike Church's team were pulling out of racing.

Luckily for Swordy some blistering results on the domestic stage – his double wins at Lyng and Hawkstone were stand-out rides in >>

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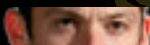
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SWORDYON...

IMPENDING FATHERHOOD >>

"The birth should be around the middle of April. We had to have IVF and it was the second attempt so it's been a bit of a stressful time over the last year and it will be nice just to get him here. We've moved to be near to Jodie's parents and got the nursery ready so we're all set. We're really excited and we've got a name but I can't tell you it – his name's Smurf at the minute!

"There have been a few hard times – especially for Jodie – but we can't wait. I think Jodie's going to have a Caesarean so obviously I'll definitely be able to be here and then it will probably be a few months before he gets to a race. He'll probably be at the British rounds later in the year.

"Luckily for me I won't have any pressure on me to hang round the house – my job's my job and I'll work just as hard. Just because I'm going to be a father doesn't mean I'm going to take a step back and be lazy – if anything it'll make me want to win even more. I've got to put food on the table for my family – I need the bonuses!"



particular – plus his consistently strong GP finishes meant he was never going to struggle to find a ride. And he ended up replacing Shaun Simpson – the man who beat him to the British crown – on the KTM UK team.

"I'm back with KTM and looking forward to it. I've obviously won a couple of British championships with them before. It's different people from when I last worked with them but I think the bike's the main thing. They've got a really good bike, I'm getting some help from the factory and everything is in place for me to do well. I don't know what Shaun had last year but I think I'm getting similar if not the same and the factory are also helping me with some bits and pieces. The suspension's with WP so the bike package is really good.

"It's difficult coming from Molson which was

such a high-profile team with lots of staff.

I wouldn't say I was taking a step back – it's a smaller team but they've got the machinery and that's what I need. Roger [Magee] I get on really well with – he's a man of his word – and I think we can have a good year if we put it all together.

"I'm not saying I'd have moved if Molson had carried on. I probably would have stayed with them because the bike was getting really good. But as far as the two bikes go I'd say the KTM probably has the edge a little bit and I think with what I'm going to get – the suspension and stuff – it will be a good combination.

"I can't comment on the race bike yet because I haven't ridden it – we're going to Spain tomorrow to test and get everything dialled in. But I've jumped on the standard bike and out of the crate it's one of the best MX2

bikes – as it has been since the 125s."

Swordy knows all about the super-potent weapon that was the SXS125 having taken British titles on it in '02 and '03. So while his new SX-F250 is a fresh experience after five years with Kawasaki, he has had a taste of Mattighofen weaponry which was a factor in his decision to go orange for '09.

"The 125 was streets ahead of the rest back in the day – everyone was always playing catch-up. In the past I found with the KTM the suspension and the way it handled maybe wasn't always as good as a Japanese bike but I was really surprised how well [the 250F] turned. I'm enjoying the bike, I've adapted to it well. I haven't done any testing suspension or engine wise – I've just jumped on it and really liked it."

Swordy's objectives for 2009 are simple – >>

FINDING IT TRICKY TO PICK UP DBR?



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SWORDYON...

INJURIES AND FITNESS >>

"My ankle doesn't bother me one bit when I'm riding – I get a bit of pain in the morning but by the time I get downstairs and make myself a coffee it's all right. I've just learned to live with it – the muscle's good now and the actual bone and everything is stronger than my left ankle because when they did the bone graft they made the tib and the fib just one bone. The doctor said it was the best way to do it and he's done a good job – it was a mess and he got me back to riding and winning and being a contender."

"I've been training with Dave [Thorpe] again in the winter, building on what we built on last year. Just being around someone who knows what it takes – with that mentality – on a day-to-day basis, you get stronger mentally."

"It's good just having Dave as a friend. A lot of times as a rider you're so focussed you need someone there to reassure you that you can take it just a bit easy rather than going flat-out for two weeks and then finding you're really tired. It's a balance between getting on that line and going over it and making yourself mentally and physically tired."

"So to have someone like Dave there to reassure me and talk to me about the races coming up is a huge help. The bikes may have changed but getting that wheel on the startline and getting in the right frame of mind is exactly the same thing as he did. His way might not be good for everyone but it's good for me."

LAST
HUNGER!

In action at the British GP
in '08 for Molson Kawasaki

win both the British and world MX2 titles. It's going to be no walk in the park but when asked for his mission statement the Scot displays the same steely resolve that helped him come back strongly from successive season-ending injuries.

"I won both the races at Hawkstone but Shaun won the championship and I left there saying there's no way I'm not winning [the title] next year. I was really disappointed because it was Molson's last year, they'd never won a British championship and I thought we both deserved it. The British means a lot to me as a British rider and I want to win as many as I can before I retire."

"The world championship is a separate thing and when you look on paper I've got to put myself up there. It's not going to be easy but I'm prepared for it, I've worked hard all winter and I'm on a good bike – there's nothing to say I can't do it. That's what I'm looking to do – win both championships if I can."

Of course, if Swordy's going to win both championships there's one man standing in his way both home and abroad – last season's most improved rider Simpson who's upgraded to the full-factory Red Bull KTM team.

"I would've said I did probably have the best of him throughout the year until I got injured. He was riding well – don't get me wrong – and came from doing not a lot the year before so all credit to him but as

far as the domestic stuff goes I think I did have the beating of him. At the world rounds I just wasn't getting the starts but I was always coming through well at the end and a fair few times I had the beating of him in the world."

"I was disappointed because I felt I should have won the British and done better in the world but the little shoulder injury put me out for three or four weeks and basically ruined the overall standings. But I have to be happy with a lot of my rides last year and getting back to where I wanted to be. I felt good and was as fit as I've ever been."

"So carrying that on into this year I've got a good base and can start where I left off and improve a little bit more. The top three from the GPs have gone out so it's the battle between the rest. It's people who I've been racing with and beating – there's no-one like when Cairoli was winning and he was a little bit above everyone else. It's going to be a tough one to say and we'll find out as the year goes on."

"Some people think I won't win but that only fires me up even more. Maybe I didn't have any wins last year but speed wise and experience wise and wanting to win I think I've got just as much as anyone else."

His agreement with KTM UK is just for the '09 season but with a return to MX1 a done deal in 2010 he's happy to keep his options open.

"It's a one-year deal. I'm just going to take it as it comes at the minute and get the job in hand done first. Concentrate this year and work hard and if I have a good year then the deals will come. I think it's good for me to have a one-year deal anyway because it opens me up to what I can do the year after – where I can go, who I can go with."

There's no doubt Swordy's still got the fire in his belly and this, combined with a proven team and the experience he's gained during his rollercoaster career, could be – just as it was with Jamie Dobb – the right mix at the right time.

"At the end of the day I've got the team in place. I've got a good mechanic, good bikes, a good team, I'm fit, I'm hungry – what more do I need? I'm at that stage of my life now that I know what it takes, I know you have to work hard and there's no cutting corners. There's no short cuts in this game if you want to win."



bike test

Tony takes the TC250 for
a test flight in Tenerife

L I G H T FANTASTIC!

WEIGHING IN AT JUST 97KG, HUSQVARNA'S ALL-NEW TC250 IS A SHARP-HANDLING HONEY PERFECT FOR THE QUICKER CLUBMEN...

Words by Tony Marshall



Husqvarna TC250
Pilot: Antoine Meo

the **X!ight**



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I've been looking forward to swinging one of my stumpy legs over Husqvarna's 2009 TC250cc four-stroke motocrosser for a couple of years now, ever since we watched Alex Puzar putting it through its paces at the '07 Husky launch in Gallarate (Malpensa).

Back then Puzar was given the task of allowing the world's off-road media a sneak peek of what must have been the pre-pre-production machine but it was strictly a case of look but don't touch. Teasing b*****s!

I finally got my paws on the bike at this year's launch in Tenerife and the first thing that stood out – or rather didn't stand out – was the motor. For a 250 four-stroke this baby is small. It's almost like looking at a Honda 150F! With the motor weighing in at 22kg and the bike in total tipping the scales at 97kg this has got to be one of the lightest production 250cc four-strokes on the market.

While I was sat there waiting for my turn to test the TC250, out on the track I could hear the rev limiter kicking in what I felt was a bit too soon. This was in fact the case but out on the track it wasn't as bad as it initially seemed. And it was also very easy to overcome just by pulling a higher gear a bit sooner which the motor comfortably took in its stride.

I would like to see just a little more over-rev as I felt this was holding the performance back on the top-end – maybe another 500 to 1000rpm would do the trick. Bottom-end for me felt responsive – out of the slower turns I got a real punchy feeling to the power delivery and through higher speed sweeping turns when the power was more in the mid-range I was impressed with the performance.

I never felt the motor bog at any part of the day, even when I totally missed my braking

coming into a jump and massively over-jumped a table-top. Landing on a slight incline there was no bog whatsoever. The landing was hard enough to wreck my knee but the bike dealt with it brilliantly – much better than my body managed anyway!

The more the test bikes got used the better the motors on them seemed to perform. The motor comfortably pulled a second gear start – okay, I had to hold onto the clutch a little but the feel was such I got it right every time. A more conventional first gear start was super-sharp but as with all 250 four-poppers you had to be ready to pull second gear right away.

The chassis feels smaller compared to its competition – more compact is the expression that springs to mind – but the seat height feels about the same. On the subject of the seat, it didn't feel all that comfortable on the first outing – too hard at the front and getting progressively softer as you slid further back down the seat – but I didn't notice this too much after the first session.

I really liked the riding position on the TC250. Coming into turns it just made easy work of them – I was hitting every rut I aimed for even when I reckoned I wouldn't make it. This is where the bike really shone for me – it feels so light that I could put it anywhere I wanted to and even came out of ruts early to make turns even tighter. I felt like I could find lines that no-one was using or had even been used before.

The rear end was working in harmony with the bike and when, towards the end of the day, the exits to some of the turns started to get choppy the rear just soaked them up. The front also felt stable coming into the turns – with this bike having a wheelbase slightly on the short side I was expecting it not to be as

stable in the faster turns with the front end wanting to push away but this wasn't the case at all. I never felt at any point the bike wanting to break away.

Husky still don't seem to have mastered starting four-strokes yet. There was no point where it fired up with one kick and there were times when I needed someone to hold the bike for me so I could give it a good full swing. The hot start's also located down on the carb rather than on the handlebars – okay, so at least it's got a hot start but carb-mounting is a bit, well, dated.

The brakes were well sharp with a good feel to them – one finger on the lever would easily do the job but two fingers is normal practice for me. The back brake was as sharp as you like with plenty of feel through the pedal.

I have to say I do like the look of the bike – the colours work well with the design of the plastics all flowing together. Overall this bike could do with a few more revs but as it is there are more than enough for the clubmen rider.

TECHSPEC

TC250 >>

Capacity: 249.5cc

Bore and stroke: 79mm x 50.9mm

Carburettor: Keihin FCR-MX39

Transmission: Five-speed

Front suspension: 50mm USD Marzocchi (300mm travel)

Rear suspension: Sachs (296mm travel)

Front brake: 260mm disc

Rear brake: 240mm disc

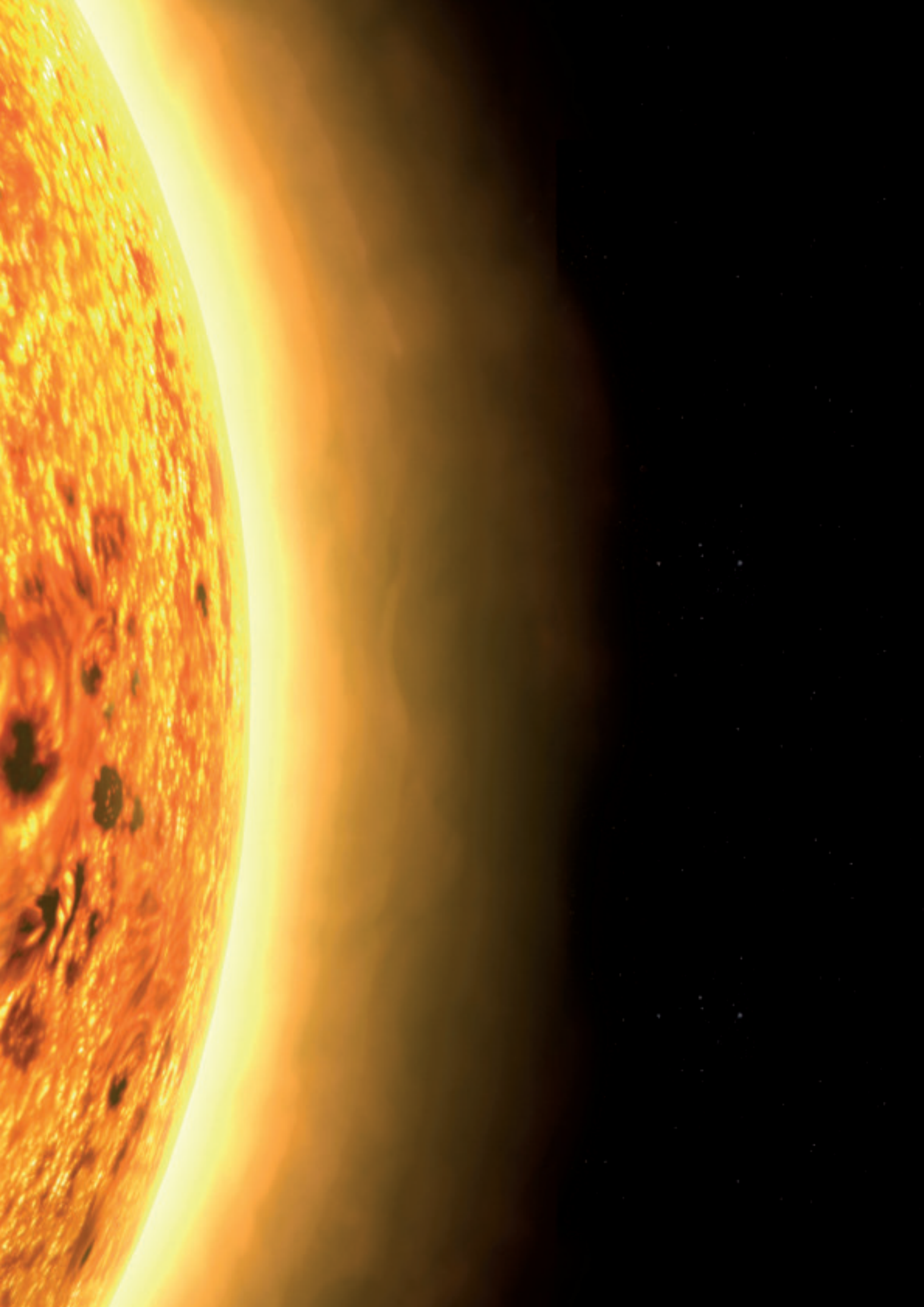
Seat height: 985mm

Wheelbase: 1460mm

Ground clearance: 325mm

Weight: 97kg





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PAIN! HURT! TORTURE! WHEN IT COMES TO BRITAIN'S PREMIER EXTREME
ENDURO IT SEEMS WE'VE ALL GOT A SOFT SPOT FOR SUFFERING...

Words by **Sean Lawless** Photos by **Anthony Sutton**



The Tough One

*Dougie Lampkin gets
his extreme enduro
debut off to a flier*



The big tyres take big tackle –
Mark Jackson demonstrates...



Austria's got the Erzberg Rodeo, Italy's got Hell's Gate, the US of A has Last Man Standing, Romania's got The Romaniacs and here in good ole Blighty we've got The Tough One!

Whether it's due to a lack of imagination or just pure down-to-earth northernism but the event title somehow fails to conjure up images of wild-eyed, spittle-flecked gladiators taking on and besting Beelzebub in some sorta insane two-wheeled-to-the-death duel. Instead it sounds like an over-cooked steak. Or my ex-girlfriend.

But such is the reputation of WOR's pain-fest that the world's top two extreme enduro riders – David Knight and Taddy Blazusiak – are at Nantmawr Quarry along with the likes of multi-time WEC champion Paul Edmondson, Hell's Gate winner Wayne Braybrook and reigning BEC champ Tom Sagar. Even 12-time world trials champ Dougie Lampkin's suited and booted for his first foray into extreme racing.

For 2009 The Tough One isn't quite as, er, tough. Sure, the two-hour race is still a serious test of man and machine but last year's suicidal descent is gone, one particularly snotty climb from '08 is run in reverse and the race finishes in daylight.

Last year the Pro class had to start with their rear wheels out but for '09 WOR's Steve Ireland has arranged an uphill sprint to the bikes in full riding kit which – after the odd flying elbow – is won by Braybrook with Lampkin and Knighter on his shoulder. Heavy rain in the week leading up to the event makes for the muddiest ever The Tough One and Braybrook needs all his trials riding skills to hold off DK until midway round the second lap when Knighter pushes the factory BMW to the front and opens up a 45-second lead.

And then it goes tits-up for the Manxman when his hydraulic clutch fails...

With Knighter out Braybrook regains the lead but Sagar, making his Husaberg debut, hits the front soon after and for a short while the local man sets the pace until Blazusiak gets ahead and controls the race from the front. The Polish former WTC star's 250cc factory KTM stroker is the ideal weapon for the job and he goes into all-out attack mode to ensure he's never headed to avenge his second-place finish behind DK in '08. Sagar runs Taddy close for second with Braybrook pacing himself to make sure of the final step on the podium.

After an epic two-hour performance Dougie Lampkin brings his 450cc Beta home fourth in

his extreme enduro debut – a brilliant ride that sees him cross the line ahead of ISDE ace Ed Jones and Cumbrian trials rider David Wood.

If things are hard for the Pro class they're even worse for the Expert riders who are quickly hooked up in chaotic scenes as they encounter the tail end of the Pros on the opening lap.

Early pace-setter is Cumbrian trials ace Stephen Dixon who uses his feet-up skills to good effect to open up a decent-sized lead before he loses valuable time getting a derailed chain back on. With Dixon struggling '08 winner Rob Pollard and Gary Daniels go through and the Expert class top three is decided with Pollard's total of nine laps good enough for a top 10 finish in the Pros.



Bradley King gets a helping hand
up one of the snottier climbs

WALKER'SWANG!

GEOFF'S BIT...

Words by Geoff Walker

Every year I say 'that's it – I'm not doing that again' but every year I think about The Tough One as the most awesome start to any year. This race has become THE extreme race in the UK and it's great to get the invite. As I have said before when writing about this race, the British fans are simply the best. It seems that pretty much everybody bring their grippy boots and a couple of pairs of gloves as they relish the challenge of helping all riders make it around the track. The WEC was a great experience on the first test when the crowd were cheering but The Tough One goes off the scale for crowd participation! On some of the hills it's like the parting of the waves as the crowd open up to show the way. Superb!

This year I had the honour of riding the Christini AWD converted KTM 300 EXC and it was yet another chance to go into a big race on a different bike with not much saddle time to prepare. The event was buzzing when I arrived and the clubmen were tearing it up. I was lucky enough to be part of the Triple D KTM racing team for the day as these fine guys and gals have been looking after the Christini bike since its arrival, hot from a top five in Erzberg and the Romaniacs. The pressure was on as this bike has torn up some of the gnarliest tracks in the world and now it had to endure two hours of my 'gentle' riding.

Steve Ireland and his band of hard workers had laid out a slightly more flowing track for '09 and I would have liked to have had a look round before the start but due to a couple of lastminute.com Walker preps with the bike I didn't get a chance to see it. The first dilemma of the day occurred when we filled the fuel tank to the brim so I wouldn't have to stop at all during the race. Drip, drip, drip... The fuel tank was split due to some Italians not replacing the correct padding on the downtube of the modified frame. Wangs! Emptied tank, chemical putty and some padding made for a temporary repair but the planned non-stop race was gone as we could only run the tank about 30 per cent full. I would have to stop at least a couple of times during the race and I wasn't really happy about that.

On top of this I didn't get a great start as I seemed to spend more time chatting about the finer working points of the

Christini rather than focussing on the race so I was almost last away but it was a long way to go. Sully had informed me of the direction we were going in but I had plenty of riders to follow so it was under control. Now at this point I would just like to say a few words about our fine editor here at DBR... Mr Lawless is not known for his overpowering enthusiasm when it comes to watching me grind myself down at races such as this one – I do have a habit of trashing myself when he is around – so it was awesome to see Sean and the rest of Team DBR out there and supporting not just me but every rider.

The race itself was pretty smooth and steady for me and the Christini. My plan was to stay out of trouble and keep my own pace. The gnarliest uphill on the track was awesome and I was pretty gutted when they took it out after a couple of laps – that hill was a grind and it was going to make the difference between the hare and hound regulars and the trials and extreme guys.

The Christini hauled me up, down and around the Nantmawr Quarry and never protested until I hit a rock and bent the gear shifter. First gear for a lap wasn't good but I had yet another pit stop coming up so I got to 'tickle' it into a useable position when I stopped. My only dilemmas during the race as far as riding was concerned were a couple of brain fade moments when I would lose concentration and screw up a simple section by just not focussing.

Like I said before, the crowd make this race what it is and it is a buzz to hear and see them enjoy the pain of each rider as the time counts down. The race ended for me when I wasn't expecting it so it was a pleasant surprise to see Mr Ireland with his trusty chequered flag at the ready to wave a tired but happy #27 Christini KTM-riding Northern Irishman across the finish in what turned out to be 12th place!



A very weary Walker!



CHEERSM'DEARS

THANKS TO...

Team DBR, ISO2 Nutrition, Christini AWD, Steve, Angry Ash, D3 Racing, Neil and crew, Throttle Entertainment, KTM UK, WOR Events, KP Equipe, Armadillo Marketing, Karlos, 3X Demolition, G Man, Stoney, No Fear Europe, 661, BK, H and TJ, The Tough One crowd...



© Eric Kitchen

Taddy waves his wad

BOULDERDASH!

TADDY GRABS A GRAND...

Just in case The Tough One isn't tough enough for the top six finishers, Steve Ireland's got an evil surprise up his sleeve – The Boulder Dash!

Taped off at the foot of the quarry is a unrelenting 100-yard route through a corridor of huge, jagged rocks. The challenge is simple – from a dead-engine start the six by now shattered stars have to ride, drag and haul their bikes through. Whoever makes it to the end first – and in under seven minutes – gets a grand in used notes.

It quickly becomes a two-man race between trials stars Taddy and Dougie with the pair going bar-to-bar before the factory KTM man is able to ghost his two-smoker over the final rock to claim the £1000 – not a bad reward for around one-and-a-half minute's work...



Geoff and the AWD Christini KTM get their skates on

The Tough One

Last year's Speed Trials champ Michael Brown runs out of gas



© Eric Kitchen

SPEEDTRIALS!

CONFUSION REIGNS...

The success story of 2008, the Speed Trials race is back this year with defending champ Michael Brown and Alexz Wigg going at it for almost the full hour before things descend into farce.

Gas Gas rider Ross Danby is first away after the uphill sprint but Wigg and Brown are quickly at the front and begin to pull clear. Setting laps around the 10-minute mark, there's nothing on the course to stop a good trials rider and the win looks to be a safe bet between the pair – until it starts to go a bit slapstick...

First Wigg picks up a last-lap puncture and when the tyre comes off the rim he's out of contention, handing the lead to Brown. Then with half-a-lap to go Brown's Sherco runs out of fuel, gifting the lead to James Dabill who himself has picked up a place at the expense of Jack Challoner's Beta running dry.

With the win in the bag cue the Laurel and Hardy music as Dabill – you guessed it – runs out of fuel! Then just in case anyone's got a clue what the hell is happening, Steve Ireland sends the actual winner – Sam Haslam – out for another lap and his Gasser runs out of petrol as well.

But the win's in the bag for Sam and after coasting down into the quarry bottom he takes to the top step of the podium flanked by Danby and Aled Price.



'Old man' Wayne Braybrook sets the early pace before settling for a safe podium finish

QUOTEUNQUOTE

JAMES DABILL >>

"I ran out of fuel. I saw Michael pushing his bike and I thought 'bloody hell, that is unlucky' and then my bike started dying so I put it on reserve and it ran out just before the bottom of the hill at the back of us. I had so many front wheel wash outs on the first lap which cost me a lot of time – I just kept falling off. I don't know whether it was the enduro tube I put in the front being a bit too hard or what but you live and you learn."

MICHAEL BROWN >>

"I was gutted. When the bike stopped I just couldn't do anything – it was a sinking feeling. Me and James both had big tanks on and thought we could do an hour but obviously not. Lesson learned. I'm disappointed. I was a fair way in the lead and backed off a little but you can't back off too much. Me and Alexz had a bit of a race early on. I couldn't quite get past him and then his tyre came off the rim. It started as a good day but it was a disappointing end."

SAM HASLAM >>

"The bike ran out of fuel up the top and I didn't realise I'd won. I'm really pleased with that. It was really hard work but I thoroughly enjoyed the event – a mega do. The mud was really cloggy so you couldn't get a great deal of speed and then over in the fields round the back the front was just washing away. It was really hard going – the whole lap, there just wasn't an easy part."

TADDY BLAZUSIAK >>

"I'm very happy – The Tough One was the last race missing on my extreme list so I'm really happy to win this race. I'm absolutely over the moon. The start wasn't good but I was in the top five so it could have been worse. But I really had to push from the first moment so I'm really tired right now. The difference when you go three seconds faster in the lap and three seconds slower is 20 per cent of energy you save and I was going absolutely flat-out. But I'm really happy and no mistakes at all – I didn't crash even once. I got stuck in the tyres in the first lap but it wasn't my mistake so I'm completely over the moon."

DOUGIE LAMPKIN >>

"I feel really good now but I was absolutely killing on the first two laps. I had a massive crash in the field up there – I can't ride as fast as they can to start off with, I need to settle down. Problem is I ran too good up that hill and I knew I was in front of David and I thought 'Jesus, what am I doing here'."

"I was just too quick, I got it completely rutted and hit a stone wall and was really lucky to stay on but I bashed my arm and my levers so that was a bit of a quietener really. But as it went on I got much more into it and felt really good actually towards the end. I had no real expectations and there was no pressure to do anything – this is not really my sport, I'm just here to have fun and I did that."

"I'm a trials rider, I'm not pretending to be anything else. I know a lot of riders and Taddy have made the switch but I just enjoy riding all types of bikes and this seemed like a bit of a challenge so I took it up."

RESULTS

PRO >>

1	Taddy Blazusiak	(KTM)	11 laps
2	Tom Sagar	(Husaberg)	11
3	Wayne Braybrook	(Gas Gas)	11
4	Dougie Lampkin	(Beta)	10
5	Edward Jones	(KTM)	10
6	David Wood	(Yamaha)	10
7	Joe Baker	(KTM)	9
8	Darryl Bolter	(KTM)	9
9	Mark Jackson	(KTM)	9
10	Martin Craven	(KTM)	8

EXPERT >>

1	Rob Pollard	(KTM)	9 laps
2	Gary Daniels	(KTM)	8
3	Stephen Dixon	(Scorpa)	8
4	Gareth Andrew	(KTM)	8
5	Rob Reese	(KTM)	8
6	Barry Kinley	(Gas Gas)	8
7	Ben Begbie	(KTM)	8
8	Simon Comer	(Gas Gas)	8
9	Wayne Mundell	(KTM)	7
10	Tyson Maytom-Jones	(Husaberg)	7

CLUBMEN >>

1	Marcus Jones	(KTM)	6 laps
2	Craig Parkes	(KTM)	6
3	Ian Richardson	(KTM)	6
4	Conrad Cummings	(Gas Gas)	5
5	Ryan Golding	(KTM)	5

OVER 40 >>

1	Allan Price	(KTM)	6 laps
2	Gavin Johnston	(KTM)	6
3	Geoff Hand	(Gas Gas)	6
4	Ian Jones	(KTM)	5
5	Gary McCoy	(KTM)	5

SPEED TRIALS >>

1	Sam Haslam	(Gas Gas)	7 laps
2	Ross Danby	(Gas Gas)	7
3	Aled Price	(Gas Gas)	7
4	Miles Jones	(Montesa)	7
5	Michael Brown	(Sherco)	6
6	James Dabill	(Gas Gas)	6
7	Gary Jenkins	(Sherco)	6
8	Dale Robson	(Scorpa)	6
9	Stu Day	(Gas Gas)	6
10	Jonathan Newberry	(Sherco)	6



With Knighter out with a duff clutch Taddy Blazusiak has the win in the bag



© Eric Kitchen

WAYNE BRAYBROOK >>

"I got a bit tired towards the end but Shirty was giving me awesome signals keeping me in touch with how I was doing and I knew I had five minutes on Dougie and I cruised the last two laps. I had an awesome start, I holeshot this race every year – they all think I'm just the old guy but I've run up there before them every single time. It's about getting off the start if you can and I've done it and fair play it makes a big difference."

"I got stuck and I was under the bike for 25-30 seconds and I saw Taddy go past but to be honest this guy's paid to do it full-time off KTM, I'm just a guy who works – I'm more than happy just to be on the podium."

TOM SAGAR >>

"I'm really happy with my first podium at The Tough One and on home territory as well only living five miles away. I'm just a bit gutted I didn't win. I had a real bad start but I got through to the front and then I just had some real bad luck towards the end of the race and got stuck behind some people but that's the race is all about, not getting into trouble and having good luck."

DAVID KNIGHT >>

"We got a hydraulic clutch off the other bike and put it on. It was on the factory bike and I've had no issues with it so we put it on that bike and I think the pushrod that goes through was a little too long and it had no free play in. It was slipping on the first lap a little so I adjusted it off and thought it might be all right but then second lap it was getting bad and I only just got up the hill at the start of the third lap."

"I had 40 seconds over Blazusiak on the first lap and on the second lap once I got past Wayne – he held me up a little bit – I put the hammer down and came round and had a minute and 40 over them. So it was all good really, it was just one of those things. I think it would have been a good cruise to the finish – I know it's easy to say now but I think I could have put a lap on everyone to be honest."

"But it's good that it's gone now – at the end of the day it's a big race and it's important but it's not the world championship. A lot of people didn't know what the bike was like and whether I'd be quick on it so at least I proved to everyone that the bike's there."

STEVE IRELAND >>

"It's been the best yet – the masterstroke was pulling it back into the daylight. There's been a massive crowd – we don't know the numbers properly but they're almost double last year's. I think it's just we're well established now and the weather's been great with sunshine all day after a week of horrible skies and raining."

"Next year we'll be at a new venue – I can't say where it's going to be yet because I don't really know. I've got a few things up my sleeve but I've got to keep The Tough One going – it's become legendary in five years. It will be in a bigger quarry where we don't have to charge people to park. Watch this space..."

"And The Tough One's Little Brother is an event we're going to develop. We ran it in November '08 and it was a huge success with the racing close and Nantmawr Quarry will now become its home and The Tough One will move onto a bigger, more manageable place."

Wayne Braybrook faces
Jeff Pakosta's camera for
Throttle's upcoming film
of *The Tough One*

FILM STARS!

IN AN AGE OF 'MOTO PORN' LA-BASED THROTTLE ENTERTAINMENT ARE DEDICATED TO PRODUCING THOUGHT-PROVOKING FILMS THAT TAKE OFF-ROAD MOTORCYCLING TO THE MASSES...

Words by **Sean Lawless** Photos by **Anthony Sutton**

Once upon a time there was only one dirt bike movie. Bruce Brown set the benchmark all the way back in 1971 when he hit the road with AMA Grand National champ Mert Lawwill. The end result – the awesome (and Oscar-nominated) *On Any Sunday* – also covered trials, motocross and enduro and co-starred off-road great Malcolm Smith along with Hollywood icon Steve McQueen.

Since then off-road films have become big, big business but in their haste to lace the biggest crashes, most insane air and stupidest stunts to thrash rock soundtracks, many directors have bypassed the story-telling element that helped make *On Any Sunday* a classic in favour of throwaway 'moto porn' movies for the MTV generation. But that's not to say that all moto movie makers have lost their story-telling skills...

LA-based Throttle Entertainment are fast making a name for themselves as producers of thought-provoking, innovative films with a strong leaning towards the extreme. Sure, their titles feature rocking soundtracks and jaw-dropping sequences but there's much more to them than just loud music and flashy photography. In fact, they're more documentaries than full-on moto movies and this element means they have much more in common with *On Any Sunday* than any of the aforementioned moto porn currently on the market.

So it's a big surprise when I pull up a chair next to Throttle boss Jeff Pakosta and ask him where he draws his inspiration from that *On Any Sunday* isn't even mentioned.

"Dust to Glory [Dana Brown's Baja 1000 documentary] was a really big one for me but one of my major inspirations comes from American football. HBO does a series called *Inside the NFL* where games are broken down each week and narrated in a very dramatic way. I kinda get my inspiration from that and being able to go to a race and break it down and kinda talk about how I see what's going on and telling really interesting stories and getting to meet these riders who race these things – ordinary people or the stars, it really doesn't matter.

"It's more about what happens at the races and what makes it unique so I draw my inspiration from being able to tell a dramatic story around the events and what happens set against beautiful imagery and music in the style of *Any Given Sunday* [Oliver Stone film about American Football starring Al Pacino].

"We're not about creating moto porn – just a bunch of flashy images and music – we're about story-telling and really engaging the viewer. What inspires us as humans? Why do we like riding so much? Why do we like racing so much? What is it about wanting to compete at Erzberg? In being one of the 23 finishers out of 1500? It's almost how mountaineers are drawn to Everest. >>





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Way of Life!

Catching the atmosphere of extreme events is Pakosta's passion

TOUGHJOB!

MAKING MOVIES >>

Pulling comprehensive coverage together from an event like The Tough One requires a well-drilled team and Jeff was taking no chances at Nantmawr Quarry.

"We'll have six cameras at the Tough One this year. I'm flying over my Director of Photography Jeff Cunningham – who's amazing – and a secondary camera, I'll be running a camera, then I have two people coming from Austria and then there's another person that's going to be on site and then we have a couple of production assistants helping us out. But since we do these races all the time we know exactly what we need and where we want to be so we're pretty efficient in getting the coverage we need. So we're a small crew – eight people."

Once the shooting has finished the really hard work begins and Jeff and his team will have to condense around 40 hours of footage including atmosphere stuff and interviews into an hour-long DVD.

"The work begins when we get back – that's assembling the story, putting that into an outline, pulling all the soundbites that we want and shaping the interviews that we get with the riders and basically what happens at the race is taken and written into an outline. Then making the magic happen in the edit bay."

"We'll assemble the movie and then we have a colourist come in and paint it – give it that look that look that really makes the images stand out and match altogether so it's seamless, not eye-jarring. Colouring is the process where once the film's complete a guy will come in and match frames. If one scene is shot in really bright light he can dim that down. It's the same type of thing as Photoshop and we do that throughout the whole movie and it's an expensive, tedious process that takes some time. Then it's the same thing with our mixing – we use 5.1 surround – so there are a lot of things involved."



Riders are drawn to these races because it's about the challenge of competing in something that's so physically demanding and difficult and finishing it."

Having previously documented Erzberg, the Romaniacs, Last Man Standing and Hell's Gate, Jeff's in the UK to film WOR's The Tough One extreme enduro – the final piece in Throttle Entertainment's five-part jigsaw detailing the maddest, baddest off-road races on the planet.

"I call them the top five hardest races in the world. Our company's about producing movies of these extreme races – that's what we want to do, what we enjoy doing and how we want to grow. The idea was basically to come out here and make a film of this race so we got in touch with the promoters who were open-armed about us coming. The things that I think are going to make this unique are the back stories we're getting with Wayne Braybrook, with David Knight, with Dougie Lampkin, with Taddy [Blazusiak] – little stories we're getting leading up to the race. What they're thinking about, how they're going to compete."

"We're getting to know the riders a little bit more and we're going to see some great action. It's taking another race in a different part of the world and showing it to the rest of the world. We're excited to be here."

After moving to LA in '94 and landing a job in the entertainment industry, Jeff got a solid grounding in more mainstream fields of filming before shifting his attention to extreme sports.

"Basically my background is traditional entertainment doing TV and film, working MTV, Nickelodeon, doing music video stuff – Usher and Mariah Carey. Then in 2003 this daily action sports show came about on Fox Sports called 5-4-3-2-1 and I was a producer on that show handling the BMX and all the motocross segments. It was there I was immersed in this motocross world."

"And I really, really loved the motocross stuff – it was a natural feel for me. I like racing and I like dirt bikes and being able to create content with beautiful imagery and music is something that comes natural to me and I love doing it."

A trip to the Erzberg Rodeo in 2003 opened Jeff's eyes to a whole new world and he's since been the driving force behind four DVDs chronicling the super-tough Austrian event with the latest release – Tougher Than Iron – potentially a breakthrough title for Throttle Entertainment.

"Motocross is still a niche market – even in the United States – and, yeah, we want to branch out into more mainstream and I think this year's movie Tougher Than Iron is a big foray into that because we're planning on releasing it into theatres and jumping into more of the mainstream market."

"Our thing is doing these races where hundreds of riders compete and less than a handful finish. These races are about finishing. Finishing is winning. There are maybe 10 really, really cool races that are all over the world that people know about but they don't get to see so we go out there and makes films of them. We just love the extreme enduro market. We see it as something that's growing – people are coming from different backgrounds like trials and like motocross because there's something new about it. Look at endurocross. You're starting to see lots of riders from various disciplines jumping into this stuff because it's new, it's challenging, it's fun."

Another of Throttle Entertainment's new releases – Journey to Hell's Gate Enduro – pretty much sums up Jeff's 'seat of his pants' technique when it comes to film making. The 40-year-old travelled to Genova in Italy to cover the world indoor enduro round in 2008 before moving on to Tuscany for the Hell's Gate extreme enduro. But when his travelling companion Mike Metzger couldn't get a ride in Genova because of a mix-up with his FIM licence Jeff decided to approach the project from a different direction.

"So we went to Hell's Gate and I decided to turn the film into Mike's point of view of racing in his first extreme enduro race. I wanted to show what it was like for him coming from a freestyle world to compete in something like that. His body is thrashed from years of abuse and crashes and surgeries so to see him compete at Hell's Gate was pretty incredible. I give him props >>

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JEFF'S FAVOURITE THREE >>

"Films that I'm most proud of? I really enjoyed working on Travis Pastrana's *Baja Diaries* because it was a completely different race. I just saw *Dust to Glory* and Travis was like 'hey, come film me in this race' and it was just an incredible time. They flipped the truck – the truck never finished – but it didn't matter, that was part of the story."

"Then there's this year's *Erzberg – Tougher Than Iron* – and the reason why is you can just tell the level of film making stepped up. We really invested the time. Rich Van Every was the director and did a phenomenal job, we had a great team of editors and the footage was just amazing this year. The film just came out really, really well and it's up for some awards at the X Dance film festival."

"And the one I did with Mike Metzger at *Hell's Gate*, it was a really good film and it came out well. But it's hard to say which one I like the best because they're all so different."

for trying but that race was brutal.

"I was ad-libbing. I wanted it to be his point of view, his story. So I would write how I think Mike would think and in the edit bay when we came to do his voiceover I would write the template and when Mike voiced it I would say 'hey Mike, if you want to say something different then say something different' so I would write the outline for him and he would come in and give it his spin."

"We like doing stuff like that. I've done a film with Travis Pastrana – *Baja Diaries* – which is basically Travis' point of view of racing in the Baja 1000 on a bike and in a truck so we followed him during the whole race and it was just a natural fit for him to come in and narrate it. It's Travis' story and that's what makes it so unique. So you're following along with Travis or Mike Metzger on these roadtrips and you get to know who they are and you get to see some incredible racing."

It's one thing making the movies, it's another getting them under the noses of customers and Throttle Entertainment have managed to penetrate a global – if niche – market.

"In the USA we have distributors to core shops and one or two that hit mainstream markets like bigger chain stores. We also have distributors to the UK, Europe, Australia and South Africa and I sell through my website that gets a lot of hits and orders from all over the place like Turkey, Iceland, Singapore – all these places that you wouldn't think there was an interest."

Of course, raising the profile of the sports they showcase from niche to mainstream is the best way to sell more movies and with 15 titles to their name, another four due out in 2009 and plans for a TV show, Throttle Entertainment are looking to broaden their audience this year with some ambitious plans.

"We're going to be showcasing some of our films in United States theatres across the country so we're going to do a campaign where we'll show the new *Erzberg*, *Hell's Gate*, *Romaniacs* and *The Tough One* – it'll be a block of movies that are run for two weeks. And we're also planning on shooting *Erzberg 2009* in 3D which is really exciting and doing a limited run in theatres across the country. Can you imagine that movie in 3D? The depth of the rocks and the racers coming at you – it could be really, really cool."

For more on Throttle Entertainment and to check out their back catalogue hook up to www.throttleentertainment.com



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Tougher Than Iron documents the 2008 *Erzberg Rodeo*



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CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'!

FLORIDA MAY BE THE DOMINANT STATE IN US MOTOCROSS BUT IT WASN'T SO LONG AGO THAT SOCAL RULED THE ROOST...

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle

Florida is a fascinating place in December. It boasts blissful British summer weather with sea breezes, warm sunshine and Bing Crosby's 'White Christmas' infesting the airwaves.

Sitting outside Duke's Lazy Loggerheads Cafe alongside an aquamarine Atlantic Ocean and enjoying a sumptuous breakfast with fabulous speciality 'grits' puts a whole different perspective on the festive season. Okay, you have to endure Bing and other assorted saccharine American crooners but it's a small price to pay!

Florida's all-pervading flatness is broken only by a vast landfill site alongside the Florida Turnpike, black with a coat of flapping crows. But this lack of hills hasn't prevented the place, with its tropical climate and gas-guzzling indulgence, dominating 21st Century American racing since a carrot-headed kid called Carmichael emerged to menace reigning idol Jeremy McGrath in the late '90s. Carmichael has since given way to another Floridian, James Stewart, who threatens to continue the Sunshine State's imperious reign.

But, of course, it was not always thus. As American motocross emerged from its European shadow another sunshine state, over

on the Pacific West Coast, became the sport's early breeding ground. Southern California had already produced '50s superstar Bud Ekins but come the mid '70s a generation raised during Bud's racing heyday began to make its mark.

Born in San Diego in November 1956, Marty Smith got hired by Honda after winning the Hangtown Classic in 1973 and went on to claim the first ever AMA 125 National crowns in 1974 and '75 before losing out to Bob Hannah in '76. Meanwhile, two other dashing blonds emerged...

Danny LaPorte – born in Los Angeles in 1957 – and Broc Glover, born down the coast in El Cajon three years later, finished behind Smith in that 1976 125 series. And when Smith transferred to the 500 championship in '77 (and gained sweet revenge over Hannah), Glover and LaPorte were locked together for 125 honours. So close in fact that only contentious last race Yamaha team orders allowed Glover to equal LaPorte's points tally and snatch the title on a tiebreaker – the first of many championships for El Cajon, a small town inland of San Diego, right down by Tijuana and the Mexican border...

'Golden Boy' Glover clinched that crown again in 1978 and won the US 125 GP at

Lexington, Ohio. And a year later, still not out of his teens, Broc claimed a hat-trick of 125 titles while LaPorte gained his just desserts with victory in the 500s.

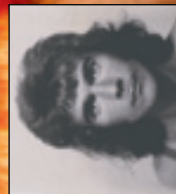
Back in 1961 another three SoCal superstars had been born. Johnny O'Mara in March in Simi Valley, Rick Johnson in July in El Cajon and Jeff Ward in June – in Glasgow! Glasgow? Yes, Ward has lived his whole life on a British passport! The sturdy, freckled little Scot moved with his dad Jack and family to Southern California three years later and regarded himself as forever American. By the 1980s this talented trio was ready to pounce!

The first was 19-year-old O'Mara, famous winner of a muddy 125 US GP on his Mugen Honda before he and Ward finished behind Mark Barnett in the 1981 125 Nationals. Glover topped the 500s that year with LaPorte fourth but Danny the Door's famous MX and Trophee des victoires alongside O'Mara led to his hiring by Yamaha and a successful assault on the 250 world championship in 1982.

Rick Johnson should have won his first national crown in 1982 but a broken wheel in the last race cost him the 250s by a wretched three points. The following year and with Johnson hurt Glover was 500 king again >>



WONDER WHY
WARD PREFERRED
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
TO GLASGOW?



was armed with his mum's Kodak Brownie camera. After art college he mixed life as a graphic designer, magazine art director, photographer and part-time art college tutor with motocross and photo-journalism. Now he's a commentator, painting pictures with words. He never did get a proper job...

JACK BURNICLE is the godfather (our words, not his) of British MX Journalism. Born in Billingham, County Durham, to Bella and nutty (his words, not ours) musical genius Stan Burnicle, Jack was mad about cars and motor racing as a kid. At sweet 16 he got a motorbike, rode it to a local 'scramble' and was instantly, hopelessly hooked. Next time he went he

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AT PARIS RENCY
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ANGREAR, 1988, AND
JEFF WARD WINS THE
FIRST OF HIS SEVEN
MX DES TITLES FOR THE
USA

while O'Mara clinched the 125 crown after a season-long scrap with Ward, Barnett and another kid who'd catapulted out of El Cajon – 16-year-old Ron Lechien.

The 1984 season saw a clean SoCal sweep of US motocross! Johnson's overdue first title was a dramatic 250 contest in which he defeated new Honda signing Lechien by eight points. Honda also lost their 125 crown with O'Mara beaten by San Juan Capistrano's adopted son Jeff Ward. But Johnny O's five Main Event wins lifted him the AMA SX championship ahead of his Virginian pal David Bailey with Johnson, Ward, Lechien and Glover packing the next four places overall. At Unadilla, New York, Lechien became the youngest ever winner of a 250cc GP while Glover won the US 500 GP at Carlsbad and all except Lechien swept the USA to MX and Trophée des Nations glory in Scandinavia!

The Hollywood glamour state almost did it again in 1985. Glover won the 500 Nationals, Ward the 250s (ahead of O'Mara and Johnson), Lechien his only ever title in the 125s for Honda and Ward edged Glover out of supercross glory by two points with Lechien, Johnson and O'Mara filling out the top five! Johnny O won Unadilla's 250 GP and Bailey joined Ward and Lechien to extinguish the Europeans in a big, shiny new MX des Nations. Only David Bailey's win in Carlsbad's US 500 GP interrupted this majestic sequence.

And so it went on into 1986. Okay, the exquisite Bailey nicked a frantic 500 title by six points from Johnson, Ward, O'Mara and Lechien but 'RJ', now with Honda, hit back in the 250 MX and SX championships, beating Bailey and O'Mara in both. Another Honda newcomer – 21-year-old Micky Dymond from Palm Desert – won the 125 series and Johnson, who claimed the US 500 GP, joined forces with Bailey and O'Mara for that famous MX des win at Maggiora.

In 1987 Dymond retained his 125 championship while Johnson lifted both 500 and 250 Nationals, the latter in a tiebreaker with Jeff Ward. Ward claimed supercross honours though – despite Johnson's record-breaking seven Main Event wins – with Lechien third. 'RJ' also won the US 250 GP at Hollister Hills and led the USA to a storm-lashed MX des victory at Unadilla.

By now a global superstar Johnson – El Cajon's most famous son – took the 1988 500 Nationals from Lechien plus another seven Main Event victories and the 250 supercross crown from Lechien, Ward and Glover, the 250 GP at Unadilla and the MX des in France with Kawasaki duo Lechien and Ward. And he only lost the 250 National championship to Ward by seven points!

California still supplied half America's top 20 – including present day team bosses Eric Kehoe, Larry Brooks and Mike Fisher – for 1989 but the golden era was suddenly about to be shattered.

At the tender age of 26, Johnson's career was cruelly cut short. He won five successive supercross Mains to outstrip Hannah's all-time win record and his third straight American 250 GP before a collision with a backmarker shattered his right wrist during practice at Gainesville. A new face from Michigan, Jeff Stanton, fortuitously inherited both 250 MX and SX titles. Lechien, second overall in supercross, did win the US 500 GP at Hollister Hills before, at 22, his social life overtook his career while Broc Glover departed for Europe to successfully redevelop KTM's 250, winning the final round of the world championship in Belgium. Broc's tally of six AMA National motocross titles wouldn't be eclipsed until 2003 by Ricky Carmichael.

Johnson did participate in 1990 – carrying plate #13 – and lost a dazzling duel with Eric Geboers at Glen Helen's US 500 GP before being finally forced into retirement. Ward helped the USA scoop a 10th successive MX des crown at Vimmerby – his personal record-equaling seventh title – and also matched Johnson's seven US titles by winning the 500 Nationals in 1990 and '91. And that was suddenly that.

'Foreigners' Stanton, Damon Bradshaw and Jean-Michel Bayle took over until the explosive appearance of San Francisco's Jeremy McGrath in 1993. But those glorious years of Southern Californian supremacy had established America as the world's undisputed MX hotbed...

THE TURNER PRIZE!

MOTOCROSS IS A SPORT WHERE RESULTS ARE REWARDED BUT STR HONDA BOSS STEVE TURNER IS ALSO HAPPY TO BACK THE UNDERDOG...

Words and photos by **Sutty**

He may walk with a nasty limp and vividly remember what it's like to have a gun pointed directly at his face by masked maniacs but Steve Turner is still probably the happiest man alive. Based in Lancashire not too far from the epicentre of the North West off-road business community (Apico, Jim Sandiford motorcycles, CCM and GH Awnings are all just a stone's throw away), Steve's a former businessman who's now living the dream and running his own motocross team – the STR Honda squad.

Pulled together for the start of the '08 season, the team came about after Steve – a former competitor who only started riding himself at the age of 37 – sustained some pretty serious injuries that meant he'd never be able to race a bike in anger again. Not wanting to lose touch with the sport he'd grown to love and hoping to help out a friend with a decent ride, the STR Honda squad was born with Nathan Parker and former Under 21 champ Jim Murro taking care of

business behind the bars.

"After I sold my business I thought it'd be fun to go racing with my son, Adam, who was 18 at the time," explains Steve. "We bought a camper, went all over the place and had a really good time. Then I snapped my tibia and fibula and two weeks later Adam fractured a vertebra in his back so that put a premature end to our racing. I started going to watch Nez [Nathan Parker] riding in the Maxxis but he was struggling to get a decent ride so I decided to set up a team myself – I dived right in at the deep end."

The team's first season was semi-successful with Jim and mid-season draft-in Jordan Rose finishing just outside the top 10 in the British championship although Nez picked up a season-ending injury during qualification for round one of the Maxxis series at Donington Park. However, despite the mixed results the team were having one thing was very apparent – for a brand new team on a limited budget – and that was that things were being done right

with the team presented professionally both on and off the track but at a level that was realistically attainable.

To ensure that the STR Honda team isn't one of those here today gone tomorrow outfits that British motocross sees so many of Steve puts his business acumen to good use. "I do try and bring my business expertise to running the team although there aren't that many businesses where you start off and expect to make a loss year after year after year! I just try to keep the losses to a minimum really but yes I do try and bring business expertise to it – I've done quite professional marketing brochures and so on to send out to prospective sponsors. We've already done well from our sponsors from within the sport – people who supply product like tyres, oils, clothing and so on – but you really need to bring sponsors in from outside the sport to make it pay. Obviously, some of the retirement funds are going in right now but the target is to hopefully break even but I don't think that

>>



Steve Turner and mechanic Ben Lightbown in the team's temporary workshop

ever happens in motocross."

And how much dipping into the retirement fund does it take to run a team of this size? "Too much! It's an expensive hobby – at the moment we're okay and we'll be able to keep plugging away but I have a full-time mechanic to pay, I've got Jordan to pay plus some of Jordan's expenses and Nez's expenses – it all adds up. Diesel is one of the biggest costs we incur but prices have come down recently and obviously there are other things to take into account as well such as entry fees but they're the main things – diesel and wages.

"That's why I only want to run two 450 riders too. Running 450s avoids all this tuning to the max and blowing up every week that you get with the 250s. I thought I'd stick with the 450 which makes it a bit easier and if you have all your riders on 450s you can interchange all the

spares which also makes it a bit cheaper and also I wanted to concentrate on two riders. I wanted to keep Nez as I don't think he'd had a fair crack of the whip with losing the whole of last season and I certainly didn't want to get rid of Jordan."

Ah yes, Jordan... The 26-year-old will head the STR Honda squad in 2009 after being drafted in mid-season in '08 as a replacement for the injured Parker. "After Nathan got injured I was looking to help someone else out and I had my eye on Ray Rowson and Jordan as well however they were obviously under contract with PAR so I didn't pursue them. I don't know if somebody said something to Jordan but he turned up at Preston Docks – I don't know how much of a coincidence it was that he turned up when he did but I thought it was a good moment and he came over and we had a chat. He rang me up a couple

of days later and we got together and sorted something out – he wasn't happy where he was."

With a reputation for being blazing fast over one lap but something of a bike wrecker, backing Jordan is a risky business but Steve's not fazed one bit. "Supporting Jordan is a bit like backing the underdog for me. Everybody wants to just run him down – 'he's a bike trasher, he's this, he's that' – but he can't half ride, he's fantastic to watch, he's just so natural and his raw speed is amazing.

"We've now got to transpose that speed from the practice tracks on to the race tracks. It's about consistency and him knowing that he can finish every race. We need to get his confidence up and that's tough on us – we're under pressure to deliver! The problem with Jordan is that he doesn't hammer the bike in practice, he doesn't kill his back brake during practice >>

After the disappointment of '08, Nathan Parker's looking for bigger and better things this time around



THE ROOKIE!

NATHAN PARKER'S TIME TO SHINE?

Down in the DBR office we know Nathan Parker best for being uber-hot model Tiffany's next door neighbour. But Nathan – and his brothers too come to think of it – also just happens to be pretty darn quick on a dirt scooter. Since turning old enough to be classed as an adult Nez hasn't really had that much luck and the 19-year-old has suffered knee injury after knee injury.

Starting his second season with the STR Honda team, Steve's expectations aren't too high. "I'll be happy if I can just have a full season out of Nez – no injuries – and see if I can build his confidence. In my mind top 15 is achievable, top 10 would be nice."

To help make this happen Nathan's spent the winter training with Dave Thorpe and already he's learning and progressing a lot. "This is the first year I know I'm going to be fit coming into the season," says Nez. "Dave's great to train with and I'm learning loads – the way he thinks about stuff is totally different to the way I've seen things in the past and it's just good being around all the lads because everyone pushes everyone else.

"Also riding with Swordy, Tom Church and Dougan will help pull me along too because one of my main things at the British is that I get nervous – I tense up and never ride like I can when I'm practising. Riding with them is making me realise that they're just normal guys – they're just the same as everyone else. Knowing that makes me feel less nervous about racing them and hopefully I won't be so tense at the big races now."

QUICKIE QUESTION TIME

TWO MINUTES WITH JORDAN ROSE...

DBR: 2008 wasn't the best year for you...

JR: "All winter I'd been training with Dave Thorpe so I was pretty fit and pumped for it. At Hawkstone at the international I had problems in qualifying and had a bad start position. In the first race I got halfway up the start straight – someone came across and there was a massive pile-up. Someone's fork leg hit my helmet, smashed my helmet, fractured my skull and broke my hand. Basically, I was struggling with my confidence after that and I didn't really like the set-up where I was. I finished with them, said I didn't want to ride with them anymore and I had nothing so I rang Steve and he hooked me up."

DBR: How's it working out riding for Steve?

JR: "It's good. Steve pays me a wage so I'm able to properly do it full-time. He seems to appreciate riders and not treat them like **** – I guess he's just a decent bloke and he's able to see things from the riders' point of view."

DBR: For the past few years you've been ridiculously quick at times although you seemed a little more subdued last season. Is the raw speed still there?

JR: "Yeah, I still have the speed. At the last round of the British last year I was second in qualifying behind Billy MacKenzie less than half-a-second behind. The speed's still there it's just a matter of putting it all together. I've been working with Dave Thorpe for three years now and I'm feeling a lot fitter and stronger than ever. I'm not going to go into this season flat-out – I'm gonna take my time and feel my way into it this year. Hopefully by the end of the year I'll be somewhere near the top."

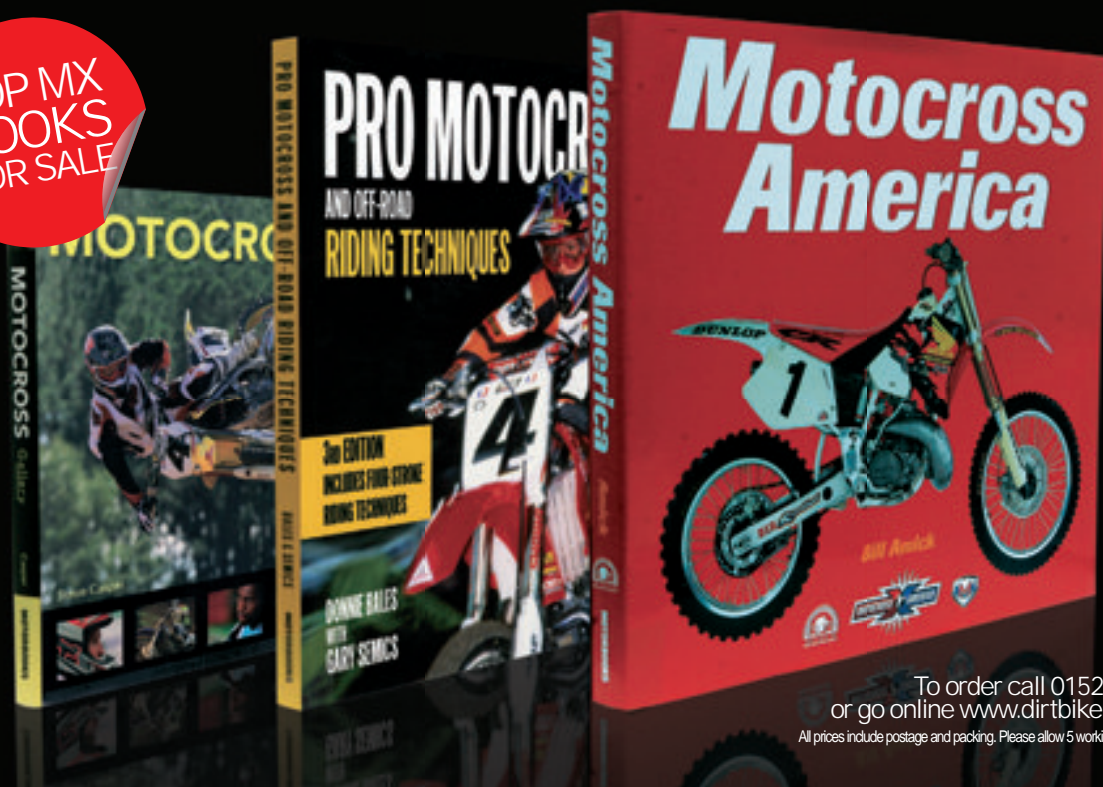
DBR: How's married life suiting you?

JR: "Married life hasn't changed anything really. We're expecting a baby as well – it's due in August. It's going to be a busy year and I need to make some money!"

Jordan Rose is still seriously fast but has a reputation as a bit of a bike wrecker to lose



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STEVE TURNER ON...

TV TIMES >>

"I don't think the coverage offers enough for the teams to work with. Unless you're Billy Mac, Swordy or Shaun Simpson you're lucky to get a mention. I would like to see them interview two or three different riders at each event either in the awnings or on the startline to give the riders and their teams more exposure and to give their sponsors a chance to see their logos on TV."

"The other problem for me is that there's no set time when it's on after the racing – so nobody really knows when it's on. That's a bad situation. I know why it happens – if you want to get it on within four days of the race it's going to cost a hell of a lot more than if you have it some time in the next two weeks. That's the problem – it's all about money."

"It's catch-22 because if you could guarantee that it was on every Thursday after the racing you'd have a lot more viewers. So then you'd have more to sell, more to bring in – but you've got to lay the money out first. Unless you get that right you'll never get the decent sponsors on board. There has to be a commercial return for the sponsors otherwise they won't invest. At the moment the whole economy's knackered isn't it so I think it's just going to be a case of everybody riding the storm waiting for things to get a little bit better and then trying to get out there and chase new sponsors."

HONDA'S HELP? >>

"We do get a bit of support from Honda but we're still a very new team, we've only done one season and we didn't get brilliant results. We had a 12th and 13th in the British and it's a results-orientated business – the manufacturers are only interested in results. We get all our bikes from Honda and we get a bit of support on spares. Hopefully if we have a good result this season then we'll get more support next year. We try and do a good job for them and hopefully we'll get repaid with better help but this year there are more Honda teams on board – Mick Aldous Racing and Twisted-7 have gone to Honda too – so it's going to be tricky."

THE PIMP LIMP >>

"I got sideways on the take-off of a drop-off jump at Dean Moor and being so crap I wasn't able to correct it in mid air. As the bike tried to highside me on landing my right leg slipped off the footpeg and was dragged under the bike, resulting in a spiral fracture of my tib and ripping my fib out of my ankle. The surgeon did a great job of fixing it, inserting a rod down the centre of the tib and plating my ankle to provide a platform to re-attach the fib. He did manage to snap a drill bit during the operation which he didn't have time to look for so that's still in there."

"The leg's not too bad really although with my ACL detached in the same leg from a previous injury about 25 years ago I have a pretty bad limp which is now starting to have an adverse affect on the opposite hip as it tries to compensate. I plan to have the metalwork removed later in the year after the season is over as some of the screws are starting to work loose giving me a bit of gip now and again."

"I wouldn't change a thing though, I loved competing and now I love running the team. Motocross is like a drug, you have to have your fix. The only bad thing is that motocross is a more expensive habit."

TEAM PARTNERS >>

"I've really got to thank our team's sponsors and partners because without them we wouldn't be able to run as successfully as we do. You can see all of these on our new website at www.strhonda.com – in alphabetical order these are Answer, Apico, Arai, AWR, Burrow Humphreys Insurance, Diadora, DEP, Fro Systems, Gate3.co.uk, Goldfren, Graf-fix, Michelin, Polysport, Pro Clean, Pro Taper, Pro-Carbon, Putoline, Racebikebitz, Raptor, Regina, Shock Tech, Talon, Trackyou.co.uk, Twin Air, Von Zipper and Works Connection. Thanks to everyone – the team really appreciates your help!"

Steve puts his business acumen to good use



Steve's aftermarket ankle

– you can't practice it out of him because he doesn't do it then! He only does it in a race situation when he's under pressure. It's difficult.

"I've got to ensure that Jordan's as comfortable as he can be then hopefully his results will come. He's not going to get them by me shouting at him and he's not going to try any harder than he already does now. He doesn't need bawling and shouting at to try hard – in my opinion he's not that sort of person."

"I've spoken to previous team managers that he's had and they've said if he's got pressures financially at home then he's not going to ride as well either because he'll be worrying about them so I've tried to make sure that he's fairly comfortable. That way he's got no other pressures weighing down on him taking his time and focus. All he has to think about is training and riding – that's what he needs to do and I think when we achieve that it's when he'll get his best results. But we'll just have to see. I might be wrong. We might go down this road and it might be a complete flop."

So what is possible? "I would like Jordan to get top five in the Maxxis. If we can ensure he has no bike trouble and he finishes every race then I think he's got to finish top five. Look at his qualifying results. In qualifying he's always up there. He's fast enough. We've got to turn that speed into race results. The problem is he's very hard on a bike and we've got to get over that."

"People have given up on him in the past –

they take him on, they're all excited and then after a few months the mechanics and team managers get fed up. They can't wait to get rid of him by the end of the season and he's had to move on somewhere else. I'm willing to put the effort in to try and get over the problem he's got with his back brake and if I do that I think we'll come out on top."

Although Steve desperately wants his riders to win – which team manager doesn't? – the real route to his own personal happiness doesn't come from on track victories or having the flashiest hospitality unit but rather knowing that he's doing the best he can. And after all is said and done motocross is a lot more fun and less stressful than running a real business.

"We try hard – if everybody puts 100 per cent in and enjoys it as well then happy days! You get your ups and downs. You have good days and then your bad days as well. We went to Cusses Gorse last season and Jordan never got around the first corner in either race and Jim crashed in both races so I didn't get a single finish."

"That to me is the biggest test, if you can have a laugh about it on your way home then it's fine. When you've been held up at gunpoint at work, had people trying to rob you or suffered ram-raids that end up causing £40,000 worth of damage to your property then you can cope with a bad day at the races because no matter how bad motocross gets, it's never as bad as that."





ONCE BITTEN...

IF YOU WANT TO RIDE AT YOUR BEST THEN FIRST YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH YOUR UNCONSCIOUS MIND

Words by Neil Drew

Over the next few articles we're going to take a look at nerves and anxiety, the warning signs that the body and mind give you and some of the many things that you can do to prevent and control these debilitating emotions.

The first part of being able to control any emotions we feel is to understand what they are all about, where they come from and why. Again, this is a very big subject and we seek only to give you a broad understanding.

Essentially we all have two minds working as one. There's your conscious, reasoning rational mind which processes data – the thinking mind. Then behind this you have the unconscious mind which is the part of the mind which gives you emotions, it is where your memories are stored, beliefs and values are formed and kept, it is where your automatic responses and reactions come from. The unconscious mind has many functions besides these – its highest function is preservation of the organism and coupled to that function is one of protection from damage to the ego or self-esteem.

The unconscious mind is constantly monitoring the events of the outside world and attempts to predict what's likely to happen as a result of the situations that we put and find ourselves in and will give us emotions to suit the particular situation. For example, let's say you love going to parties and have some great memories of them and you get invited to another one – the feelings that will be generated by the unconscious will be that of excitement. What if, at the other extreme, you'd been in trouble at school and had to see the headmaster? The next time you get hauled before the head you would find yourself suffering with nerves and anxiety.

The unconscious mind makes links and associations to our past experiences and predicts future outcomes based on these memories. A child who has been bitten by a dog will become nervous of dogs – even if they're on a lead or behind gates. That is when the fight or flight instinct steps in. It is totally irrelevant to the

unconscious how many times the child may have seen a dog without being bitten – the fact remains that to the unconscious the dog equals potential harm. Sure, all children are scared of a barking dog but for the child that has been bitten by one the emotions run at an elevated level. This type of association will continue long into adulthood.

So now let us consider the implications of this knowledge to racing bikes. Before you get to the event the nerves will start to rise and the closer you get to the start the higher and more intense the nerves become for the simple reason that the unconscious cannot predict the outcome. You will undoubtedly have had some mishaps along the path of learning to race a bike and the unconscious will also be linking these into the equation to confirm the need for heightened nerves and anxiety.

For many competitors the nerves start the day before an event and can build to the point where sleep is impaired, making for a restless night and the burning up of much needed energy for the following day's competition. So this is where we will start with a simple tool that will help you to sleep, rest better and lower the level of nerves and anxiety.

Firstly, when you go to bed you will need to take a few moments to find your most comfortable position. When you have done that take a couple of deep breaths letting each one out slowly, then focus your attention on your breathing, seeing if you can get it to a slow and relaxed natural rhythm. Then focus all your attention on your scalp and imagine it relaxing and letting go of any tension that may be there. Then think about your face muscles and allow them to relax and settle – take your time to concentrate on all these things fully, if any stray thoughts about the next day come into your mind simply let them go and return your concentration back to the relaxation.

Now think about all the tiny muscles around your eyes and feel them relax, then your neck, concentrating on letting any tension just drift

away. Then think down to the tops, sides, front and back of your shoulders and relaxing them too. Concentrate next on your biceps and the backs of your arms and let those muscles relax. Think then about your forearms, wrists and hands, moving your attention through your fingers out to the very tips of each finger and thumb and allow yourself to feel the relaxation spreading to all those parts of your body.


Next think of your chest muscles, taking your time to really notice your chest relaxing, then move your attention to your stomach muscles and feeling them really begin to relax. Think next about the muscles on your back and those long muscles either side of your spine and letting them let go of any tension that may have been there.

Next you think about the thigh muscles and actually begin to feel them really letting go of any tension – some people imagine that their muscles are like rubber bands just laying naturally, loose and limp – then move your attention to the calf muscles and as you find yourself relaxing more and more you can move your attention down into your ankles, feet and every toe and just allowing the feeling of relaxation to spread to those areas too.

Avoid concerning yourself with how the process is going, just totally concentrate on the body parts and muscles in succession and allow the deep sense of relaxation to flow through your entire body.

If for any reason you need something more powerful then you could tense each muscle group for a few seconds before relaxing them, starting with the face muscles and working your way down to your toes. Again, full concentration is required and really tense each of the muscle groups in turn taking the time to really feel them relaxing.

It's common to find that you just drift off into a deep sleep before you reach the end of the relaxing process, then wake the following morning feeling ready for what you are going to achieve that day.



profile

*Life's a beach –
especially when
you've got the whole
Isle of Man as your
playground*

KNIGHT VISION!

A BONA FIDE BRITISH OFF-ROAD LEGEND, DAVID KNIGHT'S
BACK FROM TWO SUPER-SUCCESSFUL SEASONS STATESIDE
AND LOOKING TO TAKE BMW TO THE TOP OF THE WEC

Words and photos by **Sutty**





The big question is can Knighter be as successful on the Beemer as he was on a KTM? Don't bet against it...



KNIGHT LIKES!

A BUNCH OF THE CHAMP'S FAVOURITE STUFF...

Film: "No Limits with George Formby but Smokey and the Bandit is pretty close!"

CD: "One of Heart's probably."

Band: "Def Leppard."

Drink: "Red Bull."

Pizza topping: "Ham and pineapple."

Chocolate bar: "Fruit and Nut."

Number: "One."

Place: "Home."

Celebrity: "George Formby."

Rider: "Tarah Geiger."

Race: "Probably the Gilles Lalay or Erzberg but that's more for the social side – it's a fun weekend."

Colour: "Blue."

Car: "Robin Reliant."

Airline: "Isle of Man Steam Packet Company."

Smell: "Castrol-R."

Superhero: "Superman because I like his tights."

Dinosaur: "T-Rex."

Animal: "Dog."

Meal: "Burger and Chips."

Cereal: "Weetabix."

Fruit: "Grapes."

Vegetable: "Broccoli."

Tree: "Christmas tree."

Cartoon: "Road Runner."

"I've won two world enduro championships, two GNCC championships, six British enduro titles, one British trials title, Hells Gate three times, Erzberg twice, Last Man Standing twice, I was world indoor champion in 2008, I won the AMA Endurocross title in 2005 and 2008 and I've won a bunch of Isle of Man championships too." There aren't many dirt bike events of note that 30-year-old Manxman David Knight hasn't left his mark on and it's safe to say that he's one of Britain's best ever off-road athletes standing proudly alongside such greats as four-time motocross world champ David Thorpe and 12-time world trials champion Dougie Lampkin.

Born and bred mere inches from the Isle of Man TT course – bang between the infamous bridges of Ballaugh and Sulby right near the end of the 200mph plus Sulby straight – it's not surprising that motorcycles played a huge part in his life from a very early age. Even David's first memory is motorcycle related. "I'm not even sure how old I was," says DK. "I just remember going into the garage and trying to start up my brother Juan's PW50. I kicked it for an hour or more before I finally got it to go then just sat there revving it up."

Fast forward 20-odd years and Knighter's as mad keen as ever when it comes to climbing on bikes. That's good news for BMW who are providing Knighter with the necessary works weaponry he needs to win the Bavarian brand their first WEC title but bad news for the other contenders in the E3 class where David will be plying his trade this year. While the

BMW G450X remains somewhat unproven in WEC competition claiming only one podium result so far – with Simo Kirssi on the fast grasslands of Poland – Knighter's pretty positive when it comes to his new ride.

"A lot of people ask me why I went to BMW and the first thing I tell them is that I wouldn't ride for a company whose equipment I didn't believe in or think could do the job. A lot of people think of BMWs as being touring bikes but the G450X is a long way from being that. I would say it seems to fit me better than the KTM did, I'm a big guy and getting comfortable on a bike – especially a Japanese bike which is quite small and cramped feeling – can be difficult. The KTMs prior to the '08 models fitted me pretty well – they were quite tall and built more for the big Austrian and German guys – but last year many people said I looked way too big on the bike and it was like I was riding an 85 at times.

"That's the best thing about the BMW – it already suits my size from standard and with the new stuff that's coming all the time we're really getting somewhere. There are still quite a few bits to get sorted but we're flat-out testing stuff and I know we'll be more than ready for the first round of the world championship in Portugal."

And that's where Knighter's focus lies for '09. "The world championship is obviously the one that myself and BMW both want to win badly – it's the number one priority. I'll also use the British championship for a bit of training and it'll be nice to win another title there but the WEC is the only thing that I'm really bothered about this year."





KNIGHTER ON

COMING HOME FROM AMERICA...

"My time was done over there. I set out to do two years and I won the GNCC title both years so it was time to come home. To be honest I prefer the WEC events more and having fun is very important when it comes to doing well in these types of events – anyone will tell you that. I think the thing I like the most about the WEC is that it brings a lot of different types of terrain and the majority of them are fun to ride. They're a bit more laid back, there's a good atmosphere and everyone seems to get on better in Europe than they do over there."

EXTREME EVENTS

"I think all the extreme races are great because they're all so different – you could even class Weston as an extreme race too just for different reasons and that Red Bull Knock Out too. Erzberg is totally different from Hell's Gate and The Tough One and Last Man Standing are different again but they're all good in their own right. I also think that the extreme races are helping lift the profile of the sport because 90 per cent of the people who stop me in the street or ask for an autograph always say that I've seen you on TV at that Last Man Standing race or Erzberg – it's always an extreme race and not the WEC that they mention."

WHAT'S NEXT FOR DK?

"Some of these TT riders are big fairies [said looking directly at and for the benefit of TT winner Ian Hutchinson] so one year when I'm 50 or something I'm going to roll up and win that – on a Maico or something, no a Shuttleworth Snap. Erm...hopefully there'll be an extreme world cup come along taking in eight of the best extreme races – that would be good. I reckon I've got a few years of world championship competition left first though before I have to think too hard about anything like that. I've already won a billion times more stuff than I thought I'd win when I was starting out and to be honest there's not a lot left that I'd like to win. There are some events here and there that I'd like to try such as the Romaniacs but that's more for the social side."

THE DAKAR

"The Dakar looked better this year than it has in the past – it looked a bit more technical and not so stupid fast. It would be good to go and do it at least one time really, maybe treat it more as a trail ride than a race because if you went there the first time looking to win you'd probably end up in a box."

DOING IT FOR THE FANS

"I race because I love doing it. I don't care whether there are 300,000 people looking on or just one man and his dog are watching – it doesn't really bother me so long as I win!"



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THE KILLER QUESTION!

CAN KNIGHTER AND THE BEEMER WIN THE WEC?

After moving away from the familiarity and awesome machinery of the KTM factory team, the biggest – and so far unanswered – question regarding Knighter and his new ride is can DK win on the G450X? With only limited factory equipment filtering through to the Manxman from the Bayerische Motoren Werke, Knighter started the Tough One on what was basically a stock bike – the only mods being an aftermarket pipe, factory wheels and uprated WP suspension. If you've read the in-depth report on the race that starts on page 46 of this issue then you'll know that the end result was the Beemer's clutch quit on the third lap of the two-hour race and nobody got to see Knighter's true potential on the German weapon.

But after snapping the off-road GOAT on his works ride on familiar ground on the Isle of Man and at DBR's favourite training haunt – FatCat Motoparc where we hooked up with DK and his new lady friend Tarah Gieger just the other week – I reckon it's safe to say that DK looks right at home on his new ride.

And after watching DK around the super-technical extreme enduro course at FatCat, track owner Martin Craven agrees. "There's no way that he could get around this course any faster – no matter what bike he were on. He throws that bike around like he's some sort of animal!"

So come March 21 when the flag drops on the WEC season opener in Portugal don't be surprised to see Knighter's name at the top of the E3 result lists. He already knows what it takes to win in the WEC and he seems to be as motivated and as keen as ever. To be fair it's hard to imagine Knighter ever being unmotivated to do anything that involves riding a motorcycle, his attitude to riding and racing is simple – get out there, go fast and enjoy it too! – which is why it's never wise to bet against him in an off-road race.



No Man's an island – er, apart from Knighter's homeland



Extreme skills! DK drops in

Although Knighter's proved in the past that he's got what it takes to dominate in the WEC – winning the E3 class easily in '05 and '06 – after spending the last two years taming the very different beast that is GNCC competition he's going to have to be on top form if he wants to claim his third world title.

His main opposition will most likely come from three-time world champion Ivan Cervantes. The Spanish rider has regularly jumped between the E1 and E3 classes but has never competed head-to-head with Knighter over a full season before now. Other stiff competition comes in the form Samuli Aro, Seb Guillaume, Christophe Nambotin and David's own BMW team-mate Marko Tarkkala.

Interestingly, it's the true enduro riders who Knighter picks out as his main competition rather than the former motocross stars who seem to be swarming to the series in record numbers. "It used to be that a motocrosser could win as the events were decided in the tests which were

just on flat fields but in 2005 Sala took charge of doing the courses and things became much better. Hopefully it'll still be like that and it won't just be a case of riding on the roads between tests. The biggest trouble is that a lot of the riders are big fairies who start crying as soon as the going gets tough and they have to start pushing but at the end of the day it's off-road riding and it should be tough.

"This year we'll also be running Friday night super special type stages and there's a lot of crying going on about that too because riders are worried it might ruin their race but at the end of the day it is a race and it'll be good for spectators. The only concern I have about it is that it might determine start position and that's the only thing that might tame it down – if people start holding back to get an advantageous start time or whatever. Overall I think it's quite a good thing though and if it doesn't work it can always be dropped but if it's going to create more interest in the race and be good for the spectators then I'm all for it."

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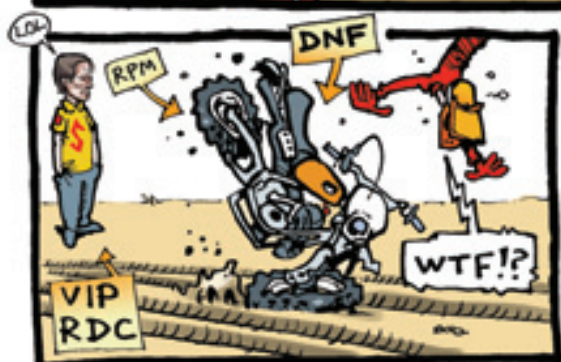
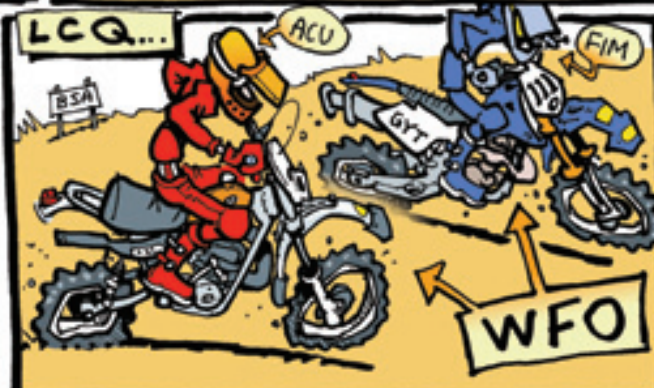
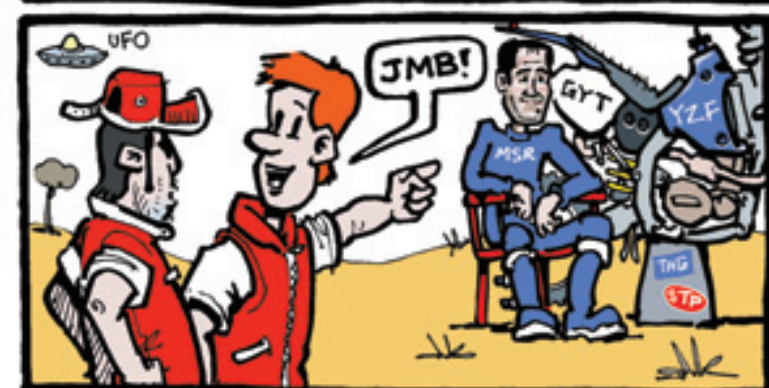
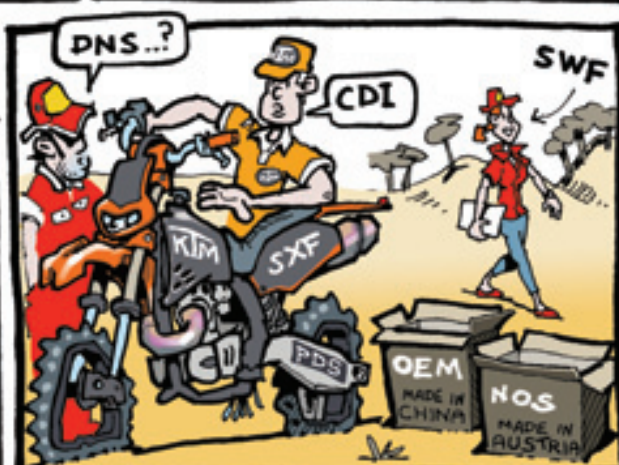
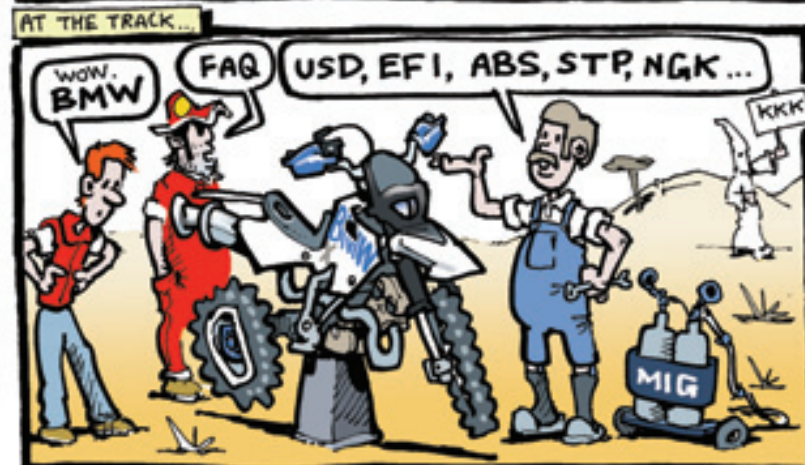
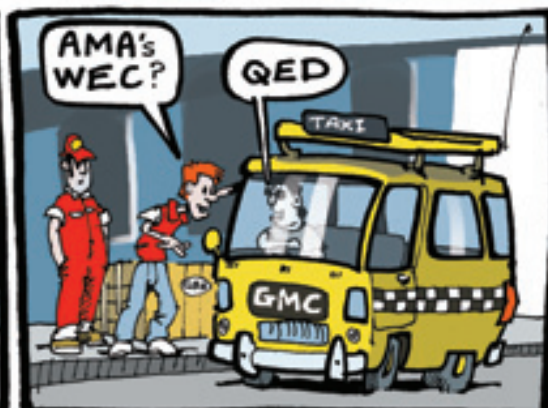
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* Three-Letter Acronym



J O I N T H E JET SET!

Photos by JP O'Connell

A READER WITH A SICKLY KXF250 DISCOVERS THE WALKER WAY TO PUT A STOP TO ALL THE POPPING AND BANGING...

Dear Geoff,

I hope you can help. I bought a nearly new '08 KXF250 for my son at the end of last season. It seemed to run okay at the time but I have taken it out of storage now and it doesn't want to run very well from low power. We have ridden it a couple of times in the hope it would be okay but the bike refuses to run well – it pops and bangs and just does not feel good.

Gary, via email

Well Gary, I think I can sort this problem pretty easily. For some reason since the model was introduced the KXF250s have come with a pilot jet which is way too small for the British climate. The standard pilot jet is a number 40 and to cure your problem just slip in a number 45 pilot jet.

If it is really cold or you are riding in heavy conditions you should change your main jet from a number 180 to a number 190 or 195. This will 'feed' the motor some more lovely go-go juice and make the bike run as smooth as the Japanese intended!

There are only a couple of steps to jetting heaven on the KXF250 and most carburetted four-strokes. Follow these simple steps and you will be out at the track performing jetting changes like a pro...

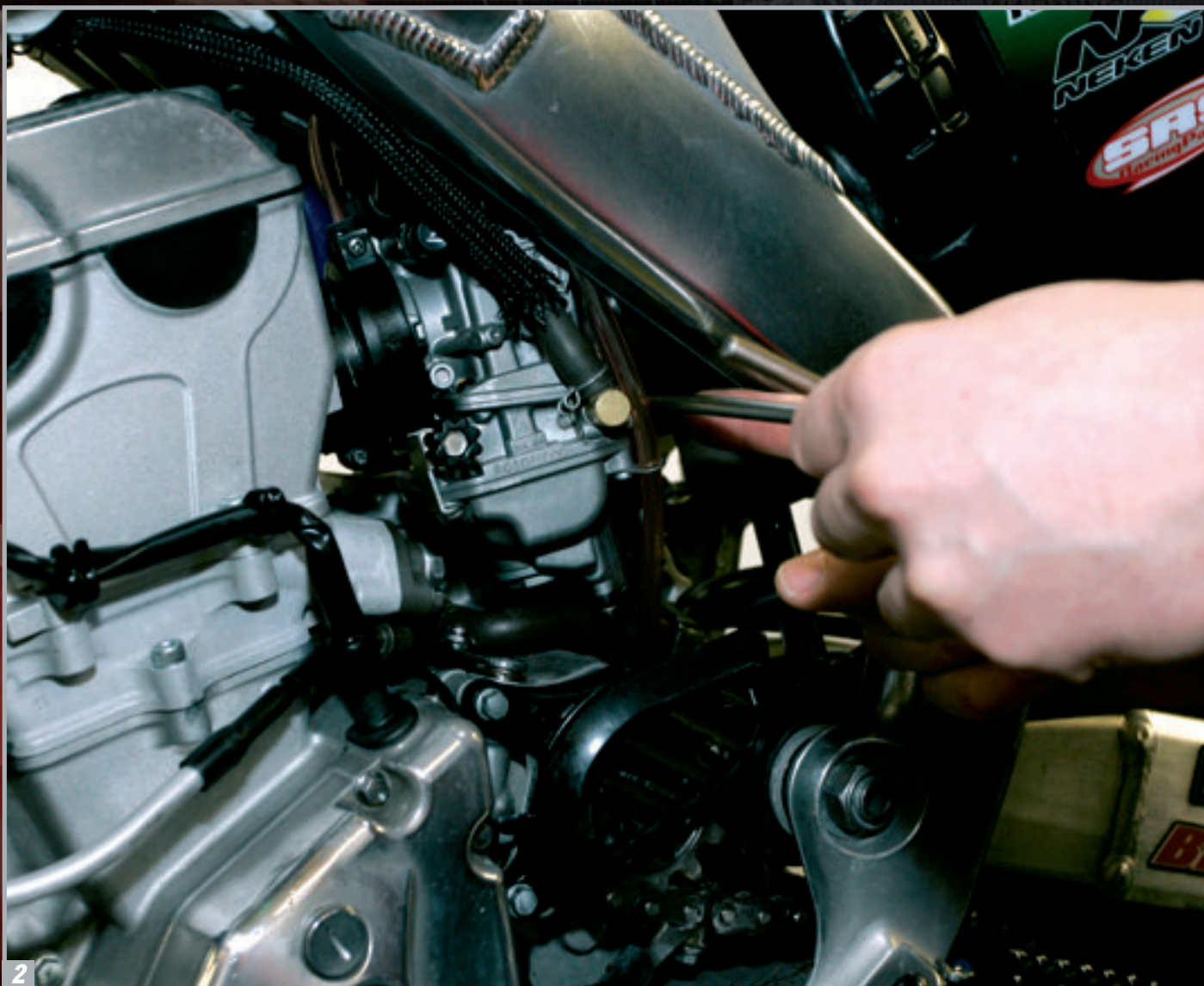
94 MAINTENANCE

Torque table
Tighten all
nut or bolt m
rider. An ove

ENGINE
Cylinder Head Cover Bolts
Cylinder
Camshaft
Cylinder
Camshaft
Engine
Engine
Engine Oil Drain Plug (Water Pump Cover)
Kick Pedal Pivot Bolt

Use an accurate torque wrench. An insufficiently tightened nut or bolt may damage the engine or cause injury to the rider. An over-tightened nut or bolt may damage the engine or cause injury to the rider.

	kgf-m	ft-lb
Cylinder Head Cover Bolts	1.0	(87 in-lb)
Cylinder	5.0	37
Camshaft	1.2	(87 in-lb)
Cylinder	1.0	(7.2 in-lb)
Camshaft	1.2	(106 in-lb)
Engine	1.2	(106 in-lb)
Engine	0.7	5.2
Engine Oil Drain Plug (Water Pump Cover)	1.5	11
Kick Pedal Pivot Bolt	1.0	(87 in-lb)
	2.5	18
	5.0	37



2



3



4

1. Make sure the entire carb area is as clean as can be. That means underneath as well!

2. Loosen the carb holding clamps at each end of the carb on the rubber boots and turn the fuel off.

3. Make sure you are not fouling or bending the throttle cables too much when the carb is rotated. If the carb is too tight you may need to take a couple of tank bolts out and lift the tank up a bit. Then simply rotate the carb so you are pushing the top of the carb away from you to reveal the bottom of the carb where the drain plug resides.

4. Take some rag or paper roll and place it under the carb area, this will catch the fuel which is left in the float bowl when you take the drain plug out with the correct ring spanner. >>

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5



5b



5c



6



7

5: With the drain plug out the pilot jet is revealed sitting next to the bigger main jet. You will need a small flat screwdriver for the pilot jet. You must make sure you have a good fitting screwdriver or you will damage the jet on removal and replacement.

Unscrew the pilot jet. If it does not come easily then you may have to use a heat gun or hair dryer to gently heat the area to make it easier to get the brass jet unseated. Never use a naked flame around the carb and never hold heat too close to the carb, you just need to heat the area if it is extremely cold in your garage.

The pilot jets generally get a bit stuck if they have never been removed before but once you have replaced it once it will not be difficult to remove again. Replace the jet with your new one after you check it is clean and the small jet holes are all clear. The jet should be 'seated' – this means a snug fit. You do not have to swing on it to tighten it, just make sure it is firm.

6: The main jet requires a 6mm socket for replacement. The main jet is easier to get to than the pilot jet so it is easily changed. Simply undo the jet and replace your new, clean jet – again making sure you don't over tighten the little brass beauty!

7: Clean and replace the drain plug making sure the rubber o-ring is in place. It is really important not to over-tighten this part as it can splay open and leak fuel over the hot motor. Not good!

8: Rotate the carb back into its correct position, tighten the clamps and any other parts.

9: Turn choke and the fuel 'on', lean the bike over to fill the float bowl, flick the throttle a couple of times to draw some fuel into the motor, take your hand off the throttle and fire the puppy into life. Let it tick over until it is warm, then feel how good the puppy runs...oh yeah! You are now a legend of jetting!



8



9

Got a tech teaser for Geoff? Then contact him at geoffwalkerdbr@aol.com for a solution to your puppy's problem...

BASKETCASE!

SUTTY GIVES THE SHED OF DREAD'S CLUTCH A THOROUGH STRIP DOWN INVESTIGATION AND FINDS IT'S ACTUALLY NOT ALL THAT BADLY WORN...

Words and photo by **Sutty**

Ever since forever I've been a bit of a blighter for abusing clutches on my dirt weapons which has made my already costly habit even more so. As well as costing a fortune in clutch plates, cables and springs the constant abuse in corners has played havoc with the inner and outer baskets of my drive killing device! Luckily for me I'm not a previous owner of the Shed of Dread which means that when I came round to stripping down the clutch on my prized possession recently I found everything to be tickety boo! I was seriously expecting to have to replace the baskets on the SoD but like everything else it's in remarkably good condition for a 13-year-old bike.

While I'm going to leave the basket well alone a replacement clutch kit has already been sourced from those lovely people at EBC in Northampton because I'm a firm believer in buying, er I mean blagging, British! Award-winning company EBC is primarily an aftermarket disc brake pad producer still managed by its founder Andy Freeman who launched his products to the world for the first time in 1978! Having successfully dominated the motorcycle industry since then EBC has gone on to develop a huge range of brake and clutch-related products for cars, vans, trucks and trains.

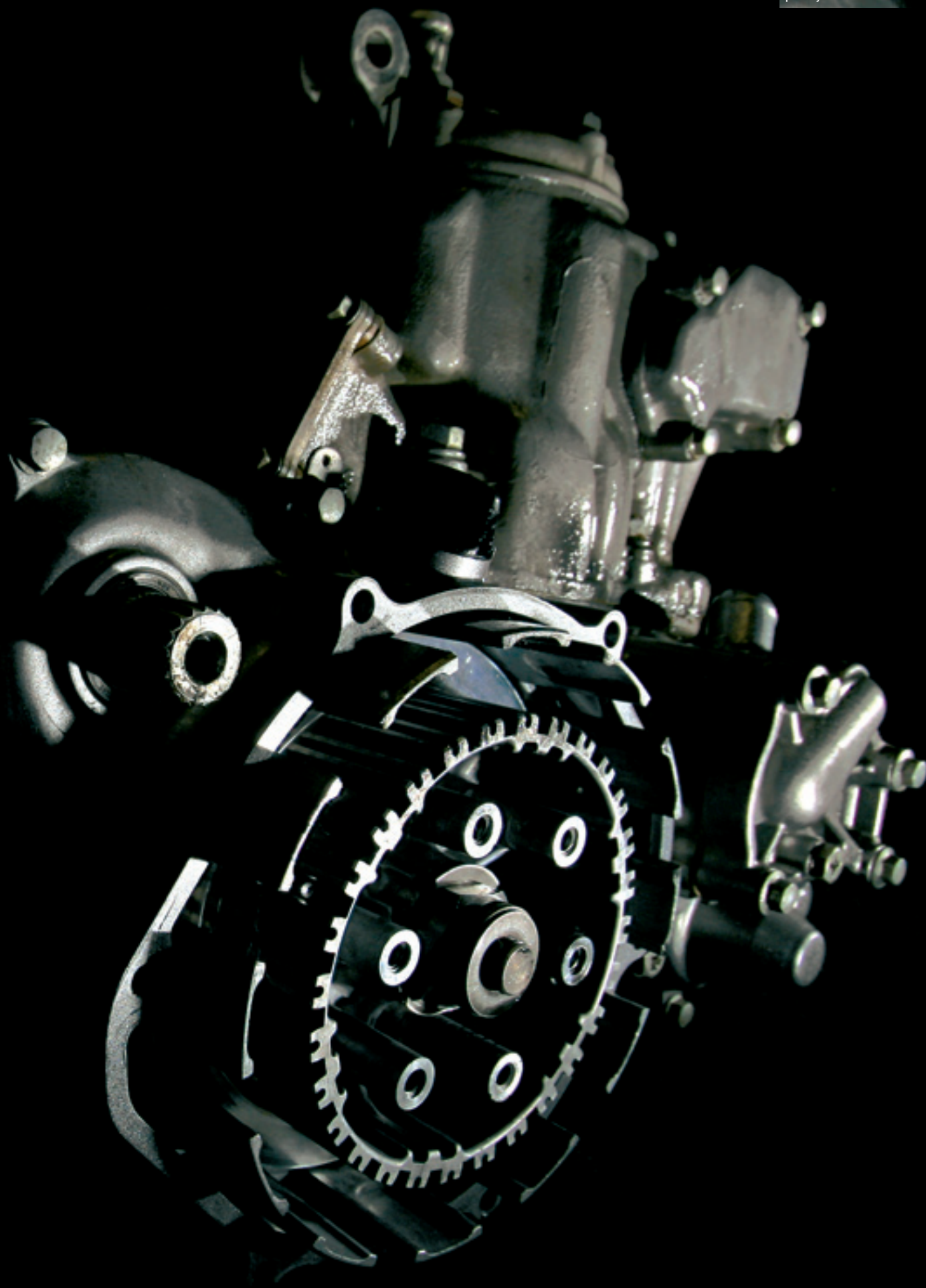
As they're more famous for their brake products I also procured some of those too – an oversize (270mm) disc brake kit for the front, a new rear disc too and a set of pads for both! I'm fully sorted for brake parts as another award-winning British company – Venhill – have kindly provided new hydraulic brake lines. By replacing the seals in both master cylinders and calipers I'll have a better than stock brake system all ready to go on the CR which is what this project is about – making the bike better or at least as great as it was when it left Honda's factory in Japan! Venhill have also ponied up a pair of Featherlite control cables for both the throttle and clutch but I'm a long way from fitting those.

As the project stands at the moment I have a freshly coated bare frame that's ready to accept the motor which will have the aforementioned clutch kit fitted and a freshly rebuilt top-end! I plan to at least replace the reeds although I may find myself fitting an aftermarket reed valve assembly – maybe either a Boyesen Rad Valve or a Moto Tassinari V-Force 3. While I'm undecided as the best way to feed the motor the exhaust is much simpler. Pro Circuit were kings of quality when it came to pipes for two-strokes in the mid '90s so that was a bit of a no-brainer. I've taken the lazy option of a platinum-coated front pipe (there'll be no need to whip out the wire wool and WD40 week-on-week) matched to a 304 factory sound silencer – this bad boy is gonna bark!

The suspension units are currently with RG3 London who are really going to town on setting up the SoD's Kayabas. The original plan was for RG3 to tune the forks and shock specifically for supercross as we had the masterplan of bringing back a huge slice of the '90s to Liverpool's Echo Arena with Delkevic Kawasaki's AMCA championship contender James Shaw on board. Unfortunately that all fell through and the Liverpoolian SX fans missed out on James hamming it up on a '90s bike in '90s kit, '90s stylee. We were also planning on giving him a '90s haircut but that was top secret so keep that shush in case we decide to stitch him up next year! So now we'll play it safe with a nice plush outdoors option.

One of the annoying things about the '96 CR250 is that it's the last model to feature forks with a massive overhang on the front axle. In fact, if RG3 weren't already on with anodising, pimping and polishing the internals of the SoD's legs I'd consider scrapping them off and taking in a pair of '97 onwards forks and front axle instead but that's not an option anymore.

With everything coming together nicely I reckon now's the time to make a big push towards rebuilding the SoD. With the motocross season rapidly approaching it would be nice to take the '96 CR for a spin at a Silkolene two-stroke championship – aka DEP – round as well as the odd three-hour GBXC race. I reckon that although the beast is almost an eighth of a century old it should be competitive with most late model two-stroke motocross bikes – especially if the suspension set-up is as spot on as I know it will be. |





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BRITISH MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP

After the dramatic season-long battle between Stephen Sword and Shaun Simpson in the 2008 MX2 class it would appear that it's the turn of MX1 to have the most potential champions this year after many riders opted for the premier class.

At the time of going to press the high-profile CAS team have not yet committed to the whole championship. However, other team managers are expecting the duo of Billy MacKenzie and new signing, Belgian Cedric Melotte, to figure after a meeting with Honda bosses in February. Team Manager Neil Prince has already indicated to the promoters the fact that the pairing will be at Canada Heights on March 8.

ACU Events, the promoters of the championship, have received written confirmation that Gareth Swanepoel, having now moved into the official Kawasaki MX1 squad, will be a series contender and Yamaha have bounced back in the class in the form of UTAG Yamaha's American signing Zach Osborne. Gordon Crockard makes a welcome return to a full championship assault aboard the PAR Honda along with new team signing Brad Anderson.

New to the paddock in 2008, CCM will field a strong four-man team comprising Tom Church, Jason Dougan, Kristian Whitley and Ray Rowson (although at the

time of going to print Rowson is injured). James Noble remains faithful to the MX1 class with his new team MVR-D Suzuki while last year's signing and ex-MX2 champion Carl Nunn moves up to the MX1 class.

Also expecting to be standing on the podium sometime during the season will be last year's Open class champion Alex Snow, now part of the official KTM team, while Lewis Gregory also moves class and machinery, riding out of the MotoXtreme Kawasaki awning.

In MX2 after last year's performance, Shaun Simpson – aboard the full-factory KTM – has to start favourite with Stephen Sword, now mounted on a KTM UK machine, expected to offer the main challenge. However, with riders of the calibre of Pascal Leuret, Martin Barr and Elliot Banks Browne all wanting to impress their new team principals expect the racing at the sharp end to be electric.

Timed training gets under way at 9.30am with the MX2 class with an official autograph session at 11.30am in the free-to-enter paddock before the first support race starts at 12.30pm, immediately followed by the first of four championship races at 1.05pm.

Canada Heights offers spectators the chance to move around the whole of the circuit with tunnel access to the midfield. Further details of the event with a full list of teams and riders can be found on www.mxgb.co.uk



BALANCING ACT!

LIFE'S ALL ABOUT FINDING A HAPPY BALANCE BETWEEN WORKING, RESTING AND PLAYING – ACTUALLY SCREW THAT IT'S ABOUT FECKING IT ALL OFF AND GOING TRIALS RIDING INSTEAD...

Words and photo by **Sutty**

It's been a cold and wet start to 2009 with many motocross events being culled due to the excess amounts of rain and snow we've suffered which all too often make for waterlogged tracks and swamped down pit areas – not good. But there are alternatives though when the weather closes in and you end up missing out on your favourite Sunday fix – going to the pub with your mates, taking the missus to the cinema, popping down to the gym, doing that spot of DIY or escaping it all and going out trials riding instead.

As someone who doesn't drink so much alcohol, has an attention starved girlfriend, lives in a dilapidated ***t hole and shares a training regime with Jabba the Hutt I think it's pretty safe for you to guess what I do to beat the blues created by a motocross-free Sunday. Hopping, skipping and bashing about on the DBR Gas Gas TXT250 is how I've spent most of my winter outside of the office and I can guarantee you that it's been a lot of fun!

The bike is on loan from John Shirt Jnr at Gas Gas UK who I had the misfortune of running into – at the Gas Gas UK company base near Buxton – with a dirty bike. If there's one thing Shirty despises it's an unwashed weapon and if looks could kill I'd have been dodging bullets at Harpur Hill. Luckily I escaped alive and headed to the hills to do some riding with Gas Gas factory rider Wayne Braybrook and our Tech Ed Wakker as they prepared for The Tough One while doing a little filming with Jeff Pakosta.

In between firing off pictures of Pakosta doing what he does best for dollars I spent as much time as possible riding over rocks, burnt out cars and up and down anything that looked even remotely rideable. In fact I had so much fun that I ran out of go-go gasoline and had to return back to base in a hurry on reserve. Shirty had the jet wash waiting for me when I got back so I gave the Gasser a nice soapy handwash – cue mistake number two!

When washing the Gas Gas trials weapons it's wise to remove the seat and jam a rag into the air intake which stops water reaching the air filter. Since I forgot the air filter got saturated which meant lucky Luke Meredith – Gas Gas technician extraordinaire and beach race legend – got the job of whipping the subframe off the TXT to clean the airbox, filter and carburettor. Bad Sutty! It didn't take Luke long to fully prep the bike and I left with a well serviced machine, a smile on my chops and one of those flappy front number boards that I mentioned last month. Sweet!

Back home at base I started to search out some suitable riding spots. Seeing as though it's possible to practice trials in the smallest of areas, creating almost no noise and certainly not tearing up the landscape like you would on a motocross or enduro bike landowners seem a little keener to let you loan a small piece of their land. Seeking prior permission in a polite manner is the key to success and it also helps if you're able to hand over a little hard cash too. Rocking

up and riding on what looks like a good bit of ground without seeking the landowner's approval is a big no-no and actually makes it harder to find a sweet stash of riding spots as word about those 'trespassing dirt biking hoodlums' spreads among the farming community quicker than foot and mouth!

Of course there are also organised trials going off on a weekly basis – oop north there are usually four good trials to choose from in a 100-mile radius on any given Sunday – so it's not always necessary to find somewhere to ride on a weekend. One of these events may be what's known as a road trial where it's necessary to use the public highways to get from section to section. For these events it's of course essential that you hold a road bike licence, full insurance on your dirt scooter and road tax as well. Seeing as though I have none of the above passing my bike test quick sharp is on my list of things I need to do before the summer is over so I can try these type of events next autumn and winter as well as the closed course ones I'm currently enjoying as often as I can.

The Gas Gas is performing flawlessly in all types of going – although I still flat-out refuse to ride when the ground is frosty or frozen – on a minimal maintenance regime. Ride, wash, lubricate is all it needs and providing I don't get too cocky and start trashing parts on rock steps and the like then it should be possible to get through a whole year of trials competition on a very limited budget!



In the pre-season hype Andrew Short hardly registered on the radar but he's so far been consistently fast



ANDREW WHO?

HE MAY HAVE BEEN OVER-LOOKED IN MUCH OF THE PRE-SEASON HYPE BUT ANDREW SHORT'S RIGHT UP THERE AND HOPING FOR A BREAK-OUT RIDE...

Honda Red Bull Racing's Andrew Short is an unlikely factory rider. In the modern day of top amateurs going straight to factory teams and filling them up, Shorty earned his ride by performing on the AMA circuit.

Coming into 2009, people were talking about James Stewart, Chad Reed, Ryan Villopoto and even Josh Hansen – but no-one seemed to be talking about Andrew Short who scored more AMA points last year than any other rider when you combine supercross and motocross points earned.

He's a top competitor – he has been for years – and in 2009 he's already been on the podium and is sitting a solid fourth in points not far behind the leaders. So who is this Andrew Short guy?

DBR: Seeing as you were one of only a couple guys who raced every single race on the AMA circuit last year, was it kind of rewarding just to get to the off-season and relax?

AS: "I still raced a lot by doing the US Open and right before the US Open I went to Sweden for an overseas race and also to Japan which was a cool experience for me. It didn't seem like I had much time to really relax or enjoy some off-time from the bike because we just went right back into testing to get prepared for this year. It was still real busy but at least I got to stay away from the airports. That was the biggest part."

"I changed a lot of things in the off-season. I switched trainers and started working with Jeff Spencer so I was kind of trying to learn a new programme and we have a new bike with Honda and I was trying to sort

out what I liked and didn't like so it was busy and not so relaxing. That's a good thing, I guess."

DBR: The perception of you around the Honda camp is that you're a serious guy who works hard and does your job – and treats it like a job. Would you say that's fair?

AS: "Yeah, I'd say that's fair – but I also do it because I love it. I'm almost addicted to it, you know? If I wasn't getting paid to do it that's what I would choose to do – what I'm doing right now. I don't really look at it like it's a job and I have to take it seriously. I take it seriously because I want to and it's fun for me."

DBR: So it's probably easier for you than some other guys if you've got that attitude?

AS: "Yeah, I guess maybe it's more work for some people. A lot of the guys, I guess they've been going at it since they were kids and they've always had everything and I was one of those kids who had to work my way to where I am now. I wasn't the fastest kid growing up so it's really fun for me to be in the position I'm in, be involved and to get all the stuff that I do. It's pretty cool and I'm definitely appreciative of it."

DBR: That sounds similar to Timmy Ferry who said once that he never got modified bikes growing up because he didn't have the support. He just raced what he had and liked it.

AS: "It's cool when you're a kid just to get free gear or stuff like that and now I get so much gear that it's almost lost its lustre but it hasn't yet. When I first

started riding with Honda I'd look at my bike and I'd be like 'man, that's so cool'. Now I don't even really know a difference until I look at a stock one and then I'm like 'oh, yeah, I guess my bike is pretty cool'. After a while you just kind of get used to it, like hopping in your car to go to work."

DBR: And you've ridden on every level of professional machinery too from the Motoworld Suzuki RM125s all the way up to your factory Honda CRF250R and CRF450R...

AS: "I think the biggest thing is just budgets. At Motoworld we were a support team and the money wasn't really there but they did the best with what they had. They ran a good programme but the finances weren't there at the time to have a machine like some of the other people. But even saying that, it was perfect for me to be in that situation at the time. Once I got to that level at the time I almost needed a better bike to move to a different level so that came at a great time and I appreciated it."

DBR: Do you feel in some ways that it was better to try and win on a non-factory bike? Because you did win on it...

AS: "I don't know if it was better because I had to work harder or something because I would've worked the same way but I didn't have the expectations. If I would've ridden for Pro Circuit and then not get the results or just had the same results as I did at Motoworld at first I don't think people would've given me a chance. But because of the situation at



Racer X's editors at large. He knows the sport and its personalities like few others and as our US Editor provides insight straight from the Stateside scene..

Steve Cox is an American moto-journalist who follows the entire AMA SXMX tour. Since moving on from US weekly Cycle News he's struck out on his own to do the freelance thing and recently became one of

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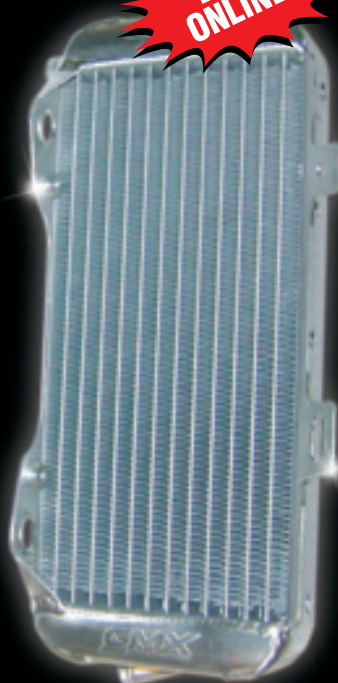
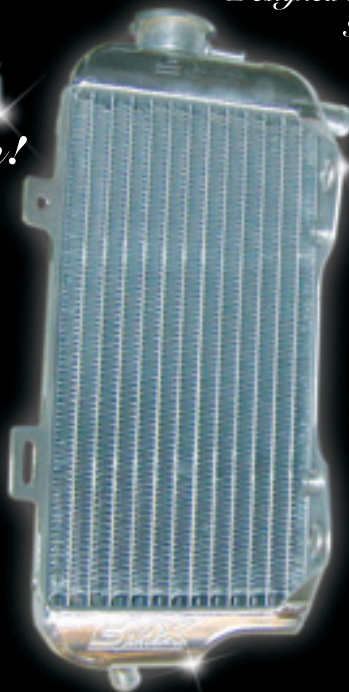
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Motoworld with the low expectations it gave me a chance to grow and to learn what professional racing is all about and what I needed to do as a rider.

"And the timing was perfect because as I was learning all of this stuff on the circuit and I started getting better and was eventually able to win, that's when the opportunity came to be on a bigger team. It gave me the time to grow and I think that was the beauty of my situation. I didn't have the pressure to begin with when I wasn't ready for it. I would've buckled if I rode for Pro Circuit before I was ready for it."

DBR: That's really honest to say. When you look at some other younger guys that have gotten everything they've ever wanted from amateurs there are quite a few who haven't put in the work necessary to be successful on the pro level.

AS: "It's funny because my age group growing up was Ben Riddle, Josh Woods, Chase Reed, Johnny Marley... Those were the fast guys in my age group and a lot of them had a lot maybe too soon or it just didn't pan out. Like Ben Riddle, he got a chance with Team Suzuki right away and there was a lot of pressure and it was hard for him to deal with it."

DBR: You actually rode a Pro Circuit bike in the pros...

AS: "Yeah, I kind of had a try-out type deal and I did awesome at my first race but it was kind of beginner's luck because I didn't even hardly know what a supercross was and I went out there and rode and I ended up doing awesome. Then, after that, I realised what was going on and I started trying harder and started crashing because I felt the pressure to duplicate it. It took me a while to figure out, just like everything else."

DBR: Coming into this season everybody was talking about James Stewart and Chad Reed and some people were talking about Ryan Villopoto but no-one was talking about Andrew Short. Were you aware of that and did it bother you?

AS: "I'm aware of it and I think those people had the expectations for the right reasons. Those two – Stewart and Reed – they had a successful year with Stewart in the outdoors and Reed in supercross and then Villopoto being the rookie... Those people deserved all that but I knew where I was and where I needed to be. I've been riding really good but I'm just like a tick off so I'm hoping to have a break-out ride. That's what I was missing last year and that's what I'm hoping to capitalise on this year."



Leading defending champ
Chad Reed at Anaheim

DBR: Are you a better supercross rider or motocross rider?

AS: "I'm a good all-around rider, I think. I could do GNCCs or enduros or anything. If it has two wheels and a throttle I can probably do all right at it."

DBR: So do you think when you're done racing MX that you will take up GNCC racing?

AS: "No, when I'm done racing I'll be done racing but I'll always ride for the rest of my life."

DBR: Really? Over time it seems like it just beats most guys down...

AS: "Yeah, that's why I would probably be over racing and travelling and going to races but that doesn't mean I wouldn't load up my truck and head to a local track or ride at my house in Texas. I love doing that stuff and I always will. I like making trails around my property and stuff like that, too."

DBR: As someone who has been successful on 250Fs and 450s, do you think it's hard to race 450s in supercross? The consensus in the pits is that they're hard to turn, hard to stop...

AS: "I agree. Last year's bike was horrible in that sense. It seemed like there was so much going on in the motor and there was so much power that it was hard to get the bike turned over, get it in and out of the turns and just hard to whip it around. Our new bike, the power delivery is a lot like a 250F, the weight is a lot more balanced and it feels really light so that's been a big improvement for us with our new bike and it feels more like a 250F."

"It has more power but even then the way the power builds, it doesn't have so much going on in the motor so when you do get it leaned over it

doesn't have that gyro effect where it wants to stand you back up. I like it. It's been a big difference for me because I do feel more comfortable on a 250F and last year's bike was really tough for me to ride. [Kevin] Windham and [Davi] Millsaps, those guys can handle all that power and I'm the guy who wanted to de-tune it all the time, you know?"

DBR: In fairness, K-Dub's been riding that thing since 2003...

AS: "...and Millsaps is pretty big but I definitely run the softest settings out of all of those guys. I think my bike's the closest to stock out of all of them."

DBR: Villopoto said that you give a 450 a little gas to pass someone and then you pass a turn instead...

AS: "And that's what's hard. The 250F guys are getting close to our class in lap times and stuff and I think a lot of those guys think they can run the pace because of that but then they move up and it's a totally different style of racing."

DBR: Plus they've got to watch out for you if they accidentally hit you in a turn or something because you'll come in and clean them out...

AS: "Oh, boy, here we go... Have you been talking to Millsaps or what?"

DBR: No, man, I've just been watching you through your whole career. But to me that's the greatest thing about you, you're such a nice guy off the track but on it you're not afraid to take some people out.

AS: "Yeah, well, if someone hits me or does something stupid, yeah, I'm going to hit them right back because if you don't then they think they can get away with it all the time!"

With the last four wins under his belt
James Stewart is on a mean win-streak





STREAKER!

STEWART MAKES IT FOUR ON THE BOUNCE
TO CLOSE DOWN SPEEDY REEDY...

What do you do when you're down 18 points to your title rival after only one race in the series? If you're James Stewart you just go out and win the next four races.

After utterly dominating the US Open of Supercross and the Bercy SX in the off-season on his new YZ450F, San Manuel Yamaha's Stewart seems a shoo-in to continue the domination. But at round one he has his hands full with defending champ Chad Reed before the two crash together, knocking Stewart out of the race completely. At round two Stewart again doesn't have it easy as he has to fight off Reed's advances for the entire Main Event before taking his first win of the season.

"I knew even if I'd have lost this weekend you couldn't come to me and tell me the championship's over," Stewart says. "For me, it was just good to try to win. To be honest, I wanted to ride better than I did last week. I felt like I rode a little better and I was able to get a win in."

With Reed in second it isn't ideal to gain back the points Stewart lost at round one. But at round three, back at Anaheim, Stewart gets away near the front while Reed finds himself on the ground in turn one. With the perfect opportunity to make up a lot of ground Stewart slowly works his way into the lead. However, on the last lap in an heroic effort, Reed passes Kevin Windham for second place.

"It was a good ride," Reed says. "I think this season's been going really good and I've been feeling amazing on the bike and tonight's just another box you check off. I went down in the first turn and came from last to second on a track that was extremely difficult to pass on. I was kind of disheartened because I had kind of already told myself that it was going to be over if you weren't up there at the front but I just tried to pick a guy off every lap and 20 laps later I got into second. It was a good ride. It definitely goes into the list of some of my favourite rides."

Stewart isn't just frustrated at his inability to pick up more than three points at a time over Reed – he's also annoyed at the fact that his Yamaha is plainly not handling well. It's apparent at all three of the first rounds and for Anaheim 2 the team put in the settings from the US Open and Bercy but it doesn't seem to help as Stewart bounces around, cases jumps, lands on Tuff Blox and narrowly avoids disasters at least once a lap. He still wins but he knows he won't keep winning if his bike isn't sorted out – especially given how Chad Reed is riding.

"It was honestly a tough weekend for me as far as just trying to get adjusted to the track and also physically it was tough for me," Stewart says. "Like I said earlier, man, if we can get wins like this I just can't imagine when everything goes smoothly and maybe we'll do a little better."

The tables turn in Houston. It's quickly evident that Stewart's bike is largely sorted out by the time the bikes hit the track in Texas and Stewart goes out and dominates. Reed almost has the holeshot but is pushed wide and exits the tricky chicane first turn outside the top 10 while his team-mate Mike Alessi takes the lead.

Quickly, Ryan Villopoto snatches the lead and holds it for a few laps before James Stewart makes a pass stick at his second attempt. Villopoto looks to have second wrapped up until he falls with a few laps still to run, handing second to Reed – again. Villopoto finishes third – his first 450cc podium finish.

"The bike was definitely better this weekend," Stewart says. "I just felt more comfortable when we first got here and we changed some stuff and everything is coming along. I think it was definitely a better weekend for me and I definitely felt much more comfortable on the motorcycle. We're just going to try and keep on improving and see what happens."

And then in San Francisco – for the first time since the race's inception – rain isn't in the forecast and there's a whoop section which may favour Reed. However, Stewart squeezes Alessi out for the lead right off the start, followed by Villopoto and Reed. Reed makes quick work of Villopoto but it takes him a few laps to pass his team-mate Alessi and by the time he gets into second Stewart is gone. Alessi continues to work his way back through the pack, eventually finishing ninth.

"Second's second," says Reed. "I think Anaheim 2 was a nice, sweet second but these last two weeks have been a bit of a drag for me. It's just disappointing that I really haven't ridden that great and James is riding amazing so we've just got to work on some little things with me. My start was better this week in the Main Event so that was good but it's just little things. There's really nothing to freak out about. He's riding really well, as he always does, so we've just got to keep working on more things and try to get there."

So, just like that, Stewart has fought all the way to second and sits only six points in arrears of Reed with 12 rounds still left to run. This is anybody's game. Actually, it may be Stewart's game if Reed doesn't get a win soon.

LITESWEST

FLYIN' RYAN, JUMPIN' JAKE!

After Monster Energy/Pro Circuit Kawasaki's Jake Weimer steals the opening round, Ryan Dungey goes on a tear to win the next two races while – at round two at least – Weimer falters. While leading the race at about the halfway point Weimer goes down in Phoenix, handing the lead and the win to Dungey.

Weimer's forced to come back up through the field and he eventually tops out in fourth behind his team-mate Ryan Morais and Muscle Milk/MDK KTM's Justin Brayton.

Then comes Anaheim 2 where Dungey again takes off with the win and Weimer fails to pass his team-mate Morais, who had the holeshot, for second. "To win every race from here on out is the goal," Dungey says following the Phoenix round. "I really don't feel like that's out there or unrealistic at all. I'm not being cocky or anything, I'm just confident in what I can do and I know what I can do but it's going to take a lot of heart and a lot of strength."

In San Francisco, though, Dungey again has to contend with Weimer who's only fourth fastest in qualifying but holds off Dungey to win their heat race and then grabs the holeshot in the Main Event. Dungey slowly catches Weimer and on lap 11 he attempts a pass on Weimer, only to wash out the front end instead. Dungey goes down and then gets up in third behind Trey Canard. He passes Canard quickly so Weimer takes the win over Dungey and Canard.

"He's good, he's fast and he's solid but short of anything else I think we'll have some good battles," Weimer says of Dungey. "I'm going to do my best to keep that [Dungey winning the rest of the races] from happening."

Weimer trails Dungey by only four points at the halfway stage in the championship.

Jake Weimer's just four points off the Lites West series lead



Ryan Villopoto leads an under-performing Davi Millsaps



Mmmmm, double vision!

SERIES STANDINGS

SUPERCROSS

1	Chad Reed	108 points
2	James Stewart	102
3	Josh Grant	95
4	Ryan Villopoto	88
5	Andrew Short	87
6	Ivan Tedesco	73
7	Kevin Windham	68
8	Mike Alessi	58
9	Timmy Ferry	56
10	Davi Millsaps	55

LITES WEST

1	Ryan Dungey	92 points
2	Jake Weimer	88
3	Ryan Morais	80
4	Justin Brayton	68
5	Chris Blose	56
6	Ryan Sipes	54
7	Dan Reardon	42
8	PJ Larson	38
9	Jason Lawrence	34
10	Ben Evans	31
14	Adam Chatfield	24

LITES EAST

1	Christophe Pourcel	25 points
2	Brett Metcalfe	22
3	Nico Izzi	20
4	Austin Stroupe	18
5	Blake Wharton	16
6	Will Hahn	15
7	Martin Davalos	14
8	Darryn Durham	13
9	Daniel Blair	12
10	Matt Goerke	11
13	Steven Clarke	8



Christophe Pourcel celebrates his return to racing with victory in Houston

LITESEAST POURCEL POUNCES!

Houston marks the opening round of the Lites East and the start of the next stage in Christophe Pourcel's career. After suffering a horrible injury in 2007 – following his win at the Phoenix Supercross earlier in the year – Pourcel hasn't raced in 17 months coming into Houston. It doesn't show.

Pourcel grabs the holeshot and plain old takes off to win the race in seemingly easy style – although he's chased down late in the race by GEICO Powersports Honda's Brett Metcalfe.

"I knew my speed already from training," Pourcel says. "It wasn't easy for me to ride, though, because it was my first race but I got no pressure so I think that's pretty good for me to ride like that. It wasn't easy for me to have a weekend like this but it worked."

Pourcel's back! The Lites East gets three weeks off before round two in Atlanta.



Austin Stroupe gives Vince Friese a love tap



Nico Izzi holds third in the Lites East title chase after the opening round

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Millsaps has struggled so far this season but he struggled at the start of '08 and came back to win a couple of Main Events

THE STRUGGLERS!

STEWART AND REED BLAH, BLAH, BLAH – THIS MONTH OUR MAN MATTHES IS MORE INTERESTED IN THE UNDER-ACHIEVERS...

Words by STEVE MATTHES Photo by STEVE COX

We're five rounds into the Supercross series and by the time you blokes read this we'll have a clear idea of who's going to win this damn title. James Stewart's ripped off four straight wins after his disastrous opening round while Chad Reed has lost a little bit of his mojo and hasn't challenged James the way we saw early on. He needs to get back on it and hopefully grab a win to stop the Stewie Express.

The tracks have been really good followed by some stinkers. In San Fran the quality and quantity of dirt used is very poor. The tracks suffer when there is no upkeep on them y'know?

Reed needs to win to get into James' head that he is going to be a force but after battling some set-up problems early on James is settled into a setting that's working for him. I guess the problem is he tested at one speed but when pressured by Chad he was going faster and his choices for settings weren't working. Whatever the deal is, Reedy needs to get back to his early season speed.

I think the biggest surprise is no surprise – Joe Gibbs Racing's Josh Grant. The talented but troubled Californian is really showing everybody that his opening race win was no fluke. Well, that was a fluke but you know what I mean. He's always had the skills but lots of people in racing circles doubted his ability to stay focused and not lose his cool out on the track. Trouble has seemed to follow him around on and off the track but in 2009 we are seeing what a good programme can do for a racer.

Josh moved out to the countryside of North Carolina and worked extensively with Gibbs' trainers – there's not a whole lot out on the east coast of America where the JGR facilities are to get a guy into trouble. He's never finished out of the top five, hasn't crashed in a Main and has kept charging hard the whole race. Nothing rattles him and he's proving to me that he'll be a front runner in the 450s for a long time.

Some other things that are going on behind the top guys are interesting as well – the media of our sport seems to follow the top riders a ton but leaves the rest of the guys looking for any recognition they can get. Let's take a look at some of the riders wishing they could hit reset on the season...

Davi Millsaps – the Red Rider has been fighting his bike all season long. Before the SX series got into full swing I spoke with a long-time Honda employee and he said Millsaps was setting new track records every day and was looking like the best of a powerful bunch. It just hasn't happened and his finishes so far this year have been abysmal. His best has been a seventh and he's had a bunch out of the top 10 – the man who won two races last year just can't find the magic early on in '09.

The reports have been that he just isn't happy with the all-new CRF450. The Honda engineers have really made the bike compact for 2009 and Davi, being one of the bigger riders out there, just can't adapt to the smallish size. I'm not sure I buy into that one as Factory Honda can make a machine fit whatever way you want. Others report he's been burned out of the training and riding and needs to have some time off to rediscover his passion. I don't know for sure but I do know the guy has a ton of talent and talent will mostly rise to the top eventually.

Mike Alessi – the can't miss kid has missed a bunch lately. He's never been known as a supercross specialist but last season, in his debut in the 450 class, he was going pretty well until he hurt himself early on and never returned to the series. This year by all accounts he was doing well but suffered another setback when he broke his leg testing at the Suzuki track.

This injury gave him a late start on the 2009 season but to his credit he manned up and came out to A1 ready to go. The apparent lack of fitness was obvious to everyone but you know Mike, he's always going to go out there and give it

100 per cent. He's also going to pull some holeshots along the way. Actually, he's going to pull every start that he lines up for. There are some riders that are scared to get the start because they know they cannot hold the pace and will look bad going to the back of the pack. Not Mike! He doesn't care – the holeshot is a source of pride for him and he'll get them all damnit!

Early on he wasn't very good but as of late he's rounding into form and finds himself in that five to 10 spot. All things being equal that's not too bad and if he was 100 per cent coming into the season he wouldn't do much better. The biggest thing with him is the off the track things he has to deal with. Mike needs to look back at history and see that having your dad around your whole career doesn't work out so well.

Nick Wey – the rider that was battling for podiums a few seasons ago just can't catch a break these days. The switch from the unproven-in-supercross KTM to the Yamaha YZ450 was supposed to agree with him but he's missed two Main Events and struggled in the other ones. I think with Nick he was in limbo waiting for a ride in the off-season and it now shows. The team he's on came together late and Nick was riding a Honda that he bought himself for much of the off-season.

He's got talent but just can't get out of this rut right now and he needs to figure something out soon or he's going to be on the outside looking in. I think he'll get better, let's hope for him that I'm right.

The thing that we all need to remember is that early on last season Millsaps was a guy that a lot of people wrote off. He struggled early on before getting a couple of wins and then everybody forgot that early on he struggled. A few good performances can erase any column that some goofball like me writes and there are lots of races still left to turn a season around.

Talk to you guys next month...





A TALE OF *TWO* CITIES...

THE FUTURE WEST BRITISH SUPERCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP DRAWS TO A CLOSE WITH AWESOME BAR-TO-BAR BATTLES IN LIVERPOOL AND LONDON...

Words and photos by **Sutty**

**Super-seasoned
Mike Brown continues
to dominate indoors
in the UK**



Although it's still classed as something of a poor relation when compared to its transatlantic and Australian cousins, there's no denying that the Future West promoted British supercross championship is on the up. Bringing in approximately 20,000 paying spectators over its four rounds – that were held in the sprawling metropolises of Sheffield, Liverpool and London – it's safe to say that the indoor championship is equally as adept as the outdoor series when it comes to getting paying race fans to come and watch.

In return for a ticket that costs upwards of £20 – children's tickets are of course cheaper – race fans get to witness over 20 races on a genuine Dirt Wurx designed and dug circuit as well as some increasingly popular one-lap head-to-head races and of course the obligatory dancing girls which aren't all that bad in Liverpool but fail to impress in the O2 where they look more like purple lycra clad Oompa-Loompas.

For the past few years the Future West concept for good racing has remained quite similar. Bring the best

of the Canadians over by jet, chuck in a well known American or two and then invite the best of the Brits to do battle with them – it all makes for pretty exciting stuff! Joining the Canadian entourage of Colton Facciotti, Kyle Beaton, Jean-Sebastien Roy and newbie Brock Hoyer in Liverpool and London are Americans Mike Brown and Zach Osborne who'll also face some stiff British talent too in the form of former British champions Carl Nunn and Gordon Crockard as well as South African import Neville Bradshaw. That's nine potential race winners right there and that's not counting the young wildcards like Ashley Greedy who's been putting his supercross skills to good use this winter in the German ADAC series.

The track for rounds two and three of the series in Liverpool is possibly the best ever seen in UK supercross. Dirt Wurx have designed a good 'un and then sculpted it out of damp sand that unfortunately breaks down quite quickly but roughs and ruts up making a whole heap of passing places as it does.

Osborne has the track wired from the word go and

looks visibly quicker than everyone else in the Echo Arena but when you're up against a well-experienced holedigger like Mike Brown you're always gonna have your work cut out. With a severe lack of pro class entries the normal qualifying system is done away with and replaced with a three-moto 'peg race' qualifying format from which the overall scores from the three heats determine gate pick for the SX1 and SX2 finals. Although slightly confusing for the spectators it does give the opportunity for the fans to see the top stars do battle around eight times an evening which gives great value for money.

More often than not in the heats Brown comes out on top as Osborne runs out of time before making a pass but the 15-lap finals are a completely different kettle of fish. Friday night's SX2 scrap is immense as Brown once more yanks the holey and tries his best to break from the pack as Osborne gets snarled up with those crash happy Canadians. Carl Nunn's on fire in the final and as the laps tick by he finds himself catching Brown as the pair scythe their way through the



HEAD-TO-HEAD

BONE JARRING BATTLES FOR BUCKETS OF CASH...

Head-to-head dashes are nothing new in the world of racing but when Future West brought the bar-banging battles to Liverpool for the first time little over one year ago the international racers and UK fans were sold on the concept and it's stayed ever since. The format is simple – take eight riders, pair them up and then run a short, sharp series of knock-out races that see the winner proceed to the next round and the loser go home. With race lengths of 30 seconds or less things get desperate and so it's not uncommon to see blocking, baulking and the occasional blatant take out move!

One of the riders who has mastered a way of winning is Ashley Greedy. Greedy takes the bucket of cash back to his camper on night one in Liverpool but a broken ankle suffered before the head-to-heads on Saturday night allows somebody else to grab the cash! Zach Osborne takes a far less violent victory on night two in the former European capital of culture and the young American does the deed again in London – this time jumping right over the head of Mike Brown on the triple jump to snatch victory in sight of the finishline.



**UTAG Yamaha's US import
Zach Osborne wins both
big finals in London**

lappers lap after lap. Just when it looks like time has run by and Brown has victory in the bag he misses the inside rut going into the last corner and loses a bunch of drive out of the turn which allows Nunn to lay down the awesome power of the MVR-D tuned machine to steal the win right on the line! Bradshaw finishes third while Osborne recovers to fourth.

The SX1 points-payer polishes the night off and if the fans haven't already seen enough of Brown and Osborne battling it out then this 15-lapper is sure to finish 'em off in fine style. Brown unsurprisingly takes the holeshot although this time Zach's right with him and is soon able to stick a pass on the fellow Statesider. Zach wins, Brownie stays in second and defending SX1 champ Facciotti slots into third on his loaned UTAG Yamaha and everyone goes home happy...

Night two in the Echo Arena is even better than the first as the track is tweaked to open up more lines which allows some of the riders to slingshot from one berm to the next carrying amazing amounts of speed.

Brown is awesome in Saturday's SX2 final and he takes a trademark start-to-finish win ahead of Osborne who tries every trick in the book and Facciotti who's some distance back in third. An early crash costs Nunn dearly as he goes down on a left-hander and gets trapped under his bike – not even a rider of Carl's calibre is going to make up enough time in a short race like this and his night is pretty much done.

The first attempt at running the weekend-ending

SX1 final is aborted when Husky pilot Stuart Morrison takes a tasty soil sample and the ever-vigilant ACU officials whip out the red flags. The start for the re-run is a carbon copy of the first except for the Crock Star who gets a little sidetracked on the fire engine red fo-fiddy. With Brown in front and Osborne using every single inch of the circuit as he attempts to find a way past, the crowd are already on the edge of their seats before going ballistic as the younger American powers by his elder compatriot!

Bradshaw brings home the DB Racing Honda in third ahead of three Canadians – Facciotti, Jean-Sebastien Roy who's been pretty much invisible all weekend on the #5 UTAG Yamahauler and kamikaze Kyle Beaton. It's an epic end to an awesome weekend and everyone goes home grinning.

And before everyone's faces have had chance to re-straighten, the fourth and final round goes off just one weekend later in London's O2 Arena. The O2 is without doubt the bobby dazzler of UK arenas with excellent transport links, great ventilation and lighting, a plethora of decent eateries and plenty of good – but expensive – parking. One place where the arena does struggle though is for floor space and it's some 30 feet or so narrower than Liverpool's Echo Arena and because of this the track for the season finale is tight.

It's the SX2 final that's the first points-payer to leave the line and Osborne does the almost unthinkable by taking the holeshot and pinching off Brownie in turn one to jump out into an early lead. Zach pulls a slight

gap straight away while Brown – who's sitting on a massive points lead in the championship and doesn't need to push too hard anyway – seems to settle for following Zach while he keeps Facciotti and Bradshaw at bay.

Just when it looks like everything is settled Osborne lets off a little early and Brown makes a desperate move for the front just two corners from home, snatching the lead position briefly before the UTAG team-leader jumps back by the GNCC-bound Brown to take the race victory.

While Osborne takes the battle it's Brown who wins the war – taking the SX2 championship win by a massive 23 points ahead of Bradshaw!

Things are a little tighter in the SX1 division as round one winner Facciotti trails Brown by just two points. It's Osborne who takes another holeshot in the season finale ahead of Brown, Crockard, Facciotti, Beaton and Hoyer. Facciotti and Beaton – who share the exact same date of birth of 18/04/88 – get into it over third place, a battle that sees them blow by Crockard. But Gordy fights back, snarls up with Beaton before crashing to earth as he lays down the 450's power coming out of a 180 degree bowl turn.

As Osborne works through the lappers, Facciotti kinda closes down Brown but not enough to make the 36-year-old Tennessean sweat it and that's pretty much how things stay until the fat lady sings meaning Osborne takes a pair of wins on the night while Brownie does the international championship double!

RESULTS

FINAL SERIES STANDINGS...

SX1>>

1	Mike Brown	(KTM – USA)	84 points
2	Colton Facciotti	(Yamaha – CAN)	80
3	Zach Osborne	(Yamaha – USA)	75
4	Kyle Beaton	(Yamaha – CAN)	66
5	Gordon Crockard	(Honda – GB)	55
6	Brock Hoyer	(Kawasaki – CAN)	45

SX2 >>

1	Mike Brown	(KTM – USA)	94 points
2	Neville Bradshaw	(RSA – Honda)	71
3	Carl Nunn	(Suzuki – GB)	69
4	Zach Osborne	(Yamaha – USA)	65
5	Colton Facciotti	(Yamaha – CAN)	56
6	Brock Hoyer	(Kawasaki – CAN)	45

BRITISH OPEN >>

1	Carl Nunn	(Suzuki)	86 points
2	Neville Bradshaw	(Honda)	83
3	Gordon Crockard	(Honda)	81
4	Glen Phillips	(KTM)	45
5	Paul Smith	(Kawasaki)	45
6	Dan Brough	(KTM)	40

CLUBMAN OPEN >>

1	Chad Yarranton	(Kawasaki)	100 points
2	Carl Jones	(Honda)	62
3	George Purchase	(Yamaha)	52
4	Edward Briscoe	(Kawasaki)	51
5	Jarad Goodwin	(KTM)	40
6	Alex Smith	(Yamaha)	40

CLUBMAN LITES >>

1	Chad Yarranton	(Kawasaki)	85 points
2	Carl Jones	(Honda)	74
3	Jarad Goodwin	(KTM)	58
4	Kristofer Ayres	(Honda)	49
5	Brad Nixon	(Honda)	41
6	Ryan Mason	(Kawasaki)	40

QUAD >>

1	Paul Holmes	(KTM)	43 points
2	Richard Tordoff	(Yamaha)	42
3	Justin Reid	(Can-Am)	40
4	Oliver Sansom	(Yamaha)	36
5	Carl Bunce	(Suzuki)	25
6	Ben Harman	(Can-Am)	16



Chad Yarranton does a Mike Brown in the amateur ranks

AM SPAM!

IT'S ACTION ALL THE WAY IN THE AMATEUR RANKS...

A former Future West championship winner in the 85cc ranks, Chad Yarranton takes his total number of supercross titles to three by dominating both the Amateur Open and Lites titles on his Kawasaki KX250F. After winning the first three rounds of the Open championship Chad claims the series win before doing the season sweep in London but the Lites series is much tougher for the resident of Stourport-on-Seven with some stiff opposition coming from defending champion Carl Jones.

Amazingly both Chad and Carl endure first round disasters in Sheffield and have to battle back to take the lead positions. Luckily, the Amateur Lites riders are an inconsistent bunch and a string of podium placings – two wins in Liverpool and a second place in London – see Chad finish first ahead of Jones, Jarad Goodwin and Kristofer Ayres.

THE BRIT AWARDS!

THE SX CHAMPIONSHIP CHASE FOR UK RESIDENTS...

Running alongside the FWSX international classes is a championship purely for ACU licence holders – officially titled the ACU British Supercross Championship. After round one held at Sheffield's Hallam FM Arena way back in October it looked likely that the series would be decided by a three-man battle between MVR-D Suzuki's Carl Nunn, PAR Honda's Gordon Crockard and DB Racing's Neville Bradshaw.

With the championship being run as an open class series it's no surprise that 250cc four-strokes are considered king on the tracks prised inside the tight British arenas with only Crockard, Glen Phillips and Stuart Morrison having the balls to run fire-breathing 450s.

Despite suffering with agonising toothache it's Welshman Ashley Greedy who takes a surprise win on night one in Liverpool's Echo Arena after snatching the all-important holeshot on his RM-Z250. Out front from the off he leads every lap on his way to victory ahead of Nunn – who takes over the series lead from the absent Tommy Searle – Bradshaw and Crockard who tames the 450 for long enough to claim the first of the non podium positions.

It's all change for night two though... Greedy breaks an ankle in his qualifier leaving Crockard in control as the pack leaves turn one on Saturday night. Nunn's way down the running order but pulls back through to third to ensure that he sits on a one-point lead ahead of Gordy going into London's final round.

The usable floor space inside the O2 Arena is way smaller than both the arenas used in Sheffield and Liverpool meaning the circuit for the final round is tight – like a tiger – and getting a good start is pretty crucial to success. When the gate drops it's Nunn and Bradshaw who get the best of it while Crockard clips the back of Carl's MVR-Dmobile and loses a whole heap of time sorting himself out.

Bradshaw meanwhile slots into the lead and takes an uncontested victory on his super-torquey Evo-Tech-tuned CRF while Nunn runs a safe second throughout, doing just enough to ensure he claims his second British supercross title. "I'm over the moon to get another British title under my belt," claims Carl. "The MVR-D Suzuki team has been fantastic and this result gives us a real boost for the season ahead. Overall it's been a fun series to ride in and a great opportunity to stay race fit during the winter."



Neville Bradshaw takes second in the British Open standings

QUESTION TIME

TWO MINUTES WITH FUTURE WEST'S JOHN HELLAM...

Future West's John Hellam is the main man behind the British supercross series and has been promoting indoor events in the UK since 1997. During the last 12 seasons of indoor motocross action there have been many highs and many lows too but it does seem like John and his team are getting the hang of running British supercross for British riders and British fans. We caught up with John a day or so after the series ended at the O2 Arena to get his thoughts on the UK scene...

DBR: In your opinion how did this year's series go?

JH: "It was successful, overall it went very well and the racing was some of the best I have ever seen. Rider numbers were up dramatically and despite the poor economic climate the crowds still came out in their thousands to each event. The economy was definitely a major worry going in to this season and it did affect the attendance a little bit at Sheffield and Liverpool but in London the crowd was significantly bigger than last year so it all evened out on the financial side of things which is critical to the series' survival."

DBR: What was the overall attendance figure for the series?

JH: "The attendance for the series was close to 20,000 for the three weekends with another 90 million homes in Europe and Asia watching Sheffield and London on Eurosport 2. The Liverpool and London events were also covered live by many websites including mxforum.com who produced an audio webcast. We are very happy with the amount of people who got to see or at least listen to the events."

DBR: What have you learnt from this year's championship that will help you make the next one better?

JH: "We learn something new at every event. One of the big things behind the scenes was to introduce a system we have used for many years overseas to stage the riders without confusion using a flip-board number system and matching postings. With the huge increase in riders at the first round at Sheffield the system we had been using in recent years in the UK couldn't cope. We will always try to listen to all genuine advice and use any ideas that make good sense. The other thing is to see the dancers before I hire them. We will review all that happened this year and continue to make improvements..."

DBR: How does it make you feel to see the British youngsters improve indoors year after year?

JH: "It is definitely very gratifying to see the level these kids have reached in all classes. You can now see it all the way through the age groups so there is continuity now and that is critical to produce world class supercross riders like Tommy Searle, Max Anstie, Steven Clarke and Adam Chatfield who are all part of the first wave to go global."

"This is the second time around for us and riders like Larry Ward, Ryan Villopoto, Darcy Lange, Dusty Klatt, Colton Facciotti, Kyle Beaton and many more have all competed as amateurs in our Canadian arenacross championships over the past 20 odd years and many of them still do."

DBR: And finally what does the future hold for Future West supercross?

JH: "We want to make it bigger and better but one step at a time. We'll possibly have more rounds and more venues – economy permitting – and something extra special for Sheffield to celebrate its 13th birthday!"



Crazy Canadian
Colton Facciotti



Richard Tordoff ends
the inaugural quad
championship second

RISKY BUSINESS!

THE FOUR-WHEELERS INVADE LIVERPOOL AND LONDON...

Bringing quads indoors was always going to be a risky move with many people questioning the health and safety aspect – for both the riders and race officials – of having lumbering four-wheelers racing bar-to-bar around technical supercross circuits designed and built for bikes. But believe it or not the gamble pays off as no marshals, riders or fans are harmed in either Liverpool or London and the quads wow the stand-dwellers with some excellent racing.

The stand out star of the two night's action is Filtec KTM's Paul Holmes who leads the way from start to finish in Liverpool and start to the final triple in London where he promptly stalls it after getting out of shape while waving to the 8,000 plus crowd. Despite probably wishing he'd saved the showboating until after he crossed the finish line Paul's 1-4 finishes in the two-round series are enough for him to grab the inaugural quad championship win. Second in the series is Richard Tordoff who runs 2-3 over the two weekends while Gordon Crockard's bestest drinking buddy Justin Reid steers his Can Am to third in the final standings with a fourth in Scouseville and second in the capital city.



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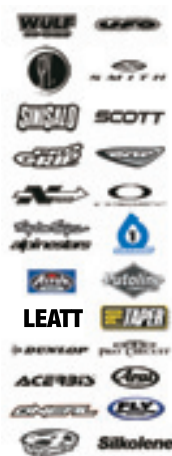
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RAGE

A motocross rider in blue gear with number 18 on the bike, jumping in the air. The rider is wearing a blue helmet with red and white graphics, a blue jersey with white accents, and blue pants. The bike is orange and black with the number 18 on the front fender. The background is a clear blue sky with some green foliage on the right side.

SXKIDS!

FUTURE WEST SUPERCROSS SERIES
WRAPS UP IN LIVERPOOL AND LONDON

SPINKSSIGNSOFF!

THE SCHOOLIE STAR WHO'S GOT UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN '09

UNDERTHERADAR!

RAGE'S PICK OF THE COUNTRY'S TOP STEALTH BOMBERS

© Mike Gurney

JOSH SPINKS

Josh has kicked the viral infection and means business in 2009



SPINKS SIGNSOFF!

LAST YEAR WAS SUPPOSED TO BE JOSH SPINK'S FINAL SEASON IN THE YOUTH RANKS UNTIL A VIRAL INFECTION LEFT HIM WITH UNFINISHED BUSINESS...

Over the past couple of seasons casting an eye around the various youth paddocks you can't fail to have been impressed by the Redline KTM set-up and the championship credentials of Josh Spinks. It's just about as professional as it gets in youth terms without running a full-factory effort.

This coming season will be no exception as Josh once again chases BYMX, MX2 and ACU U21 series success. But this time last year Josh was also raring to go in what he thought would be his last season in youth competition. He was 15 years old and had planned to go pro at the end of the season.

A genuine chunk of ex-works KTM bling was strapped in the back of the van and Josh's season got off to a ripping start when he won the second MX2 moto at the Donington Maxxis round in March. By the time the BYMX circus rolled into Brampton however all was obviously not quite right under the orange KTM canopies.

No-one could quite put their finger on what was going wrong but the early signs of fatigue due to a severe viral complaint were becoming evident. The situation came to a head after the Woodford BYMX round in July when it became physically impossible to race on a championship pace with the energy sapping complaint now really kicking in. A total rest and

recuperation package was the order of the day.

The disappointment was even further compounded to leave Josh totally gutted as he missed out on the youth world championships plus the prestigious under 21s des Nations gig. After a couple of months off the machine Josh started a gradual build-up for this season but it was well into last October before he felt he was back to anything like 100 per cent.

Josh started riding at the age of three and competing at six. The early years were littered with both Coventry club and national success. Up until 2007 Josh had been one of the real pillars in BSMA schoolboy events. A broken leg in 2004 and again in 2006 hindered progress but winning national titles at Small Wheel 85cc level in '05 and again on Big Wheels in '07 as well as the BSMA final that year made up for the frustrations of previous years waiting for broken bones to mend.

After the crushing disappointments of last season with the viral complaint Team Spinks decided there was a little unfinished business on the youth stage and one more year was definitely the way to go.

It will be the sixth year on the bounce that Josh has carried the flag for the Loughborough-based Redline KTM dealership with added input and support direct from KTM UK.

The top-flight back-up doesn't end there either as with Putoline, Golden Tyre, Acerbis, Scott, Airoh, CZ chains, DP pads and clutch, Destroy for all clothing items and Field Engineering carrying out specialist bike prep it's quality all the way. The icing on the cake however is the prospect of two pukka brand new ex-works Shaun Simpson 250F machines at his disposal and being set-up as we go to press.

The run up to the start of the national season has been meticulously planned out by Josh and dad Neil using knowledge gained from last year's campaign – their first on four-stroke machinery. Chatting to Neil recently he outlined the lessons learnt from last season, particularly with bike preparation and maintenance schedules.

The winter plan of racing predominantly on a 250cc two-stroke to build up extra strength and stamina in longer races looks to have worked with a string of outstanding results up and down the country as Josh competes almost every weekend at the highest level available on a variety of tracks and racing surfaces. Total thought, hard work and dedication for the coming campaign.

Looking back over Josh's national statistics there was a crown in '05 and another in '07 so to keep that sequence going he needs a third in 2009? Looks like an even money bet to me...

GREATDANE?

WILDEN LANE NURTURES RISING TALENT

It's a well documented fact that the fast-draining and sandy terrain of the Wilden Lane circuit near Kidderminster makes it a superb venue for year-round motocross. Less well known perhaps is the value of the smaller track that runs adjacent to the main course and acts as training ground for the next generation of motocrossers.

The purpose-built course has been designed in such a way that makes it ultra safe yet fast enough with a few jumps, hills and winding straights to test the skills of the young pilots while at the same time ratcheting up their confidence levels. Parents are encouraged to be very much hands on and can be seen at close quarters on race days guiding their offspring to the starting line then lining the course in their regulation fluorescent jackets to watch, encourage and generally act as a parental safety net, all being ready to dive in with a helping hand if necessary.

The infant school has a starting age of six years old and riders progress through the Auto

and Novice ranks at their own pace until they feel confident enough to tackle something a little more testing. It's not too difficult to spot the up and coming talent as they tend to stand out at an early age.

Over the winter months no one has been more impressive than seven-year-old Dane Reeves. Dane made the trip from Llangollen in North Wales for every round of the pre Christmas winter championship and was a sensational little winner, showing a turn of speed that was truly impressive both at Wilden Lane and at Polesworth.

Dane is now in his second year of competition and already attracting the attentions of possible sponsors who have in recent months put a variety of options the Reeves family way for consideration. Offers have included full machinery deals, kit and tyre packages for the '09 season plus one offer to build custom-made bikes – pretty good going for the average seven-year-old but then again Dane looks far from average.

Dane Reeves is a tip for the future



Auto pilots – and parents – wait for the off at Wilden

MAX!

MAX IS BACK IN SUNNY CALIFORNIA AND LOOKING FORWARD TO HIS BIG SX DEBUT JUST 12 MONTHS DOWN THE LINE...

Words by Max Anstie

Howdy everyone! So I'm back from a cold Christmas in England and getting into my training at our base in sunny California! Everything is going really well. I have been heading out to the KTM SX test track a few times a week and have been working on my skills in order to get myself prepared for the 2010 supercross season.

I have been waiting for this time to come my whole life and I think that with having KTM backing me with such a good team of guys (and ladies) like Leighton Rice, Kurt Nicoll, Devin Mitchell and Juan my mechanic I will be ready to race! The bikes have been working really well and in between supercross training sessions I've been riding my KTM 250SXF outdoor practice bike and tearing it up at some of the local tracks around here.

The house is packed with R&R KTM Race Team riders – we have Alfie Bowtell, Jordan Booker and Garrett Kite (from the USA) living with us now. We have a lot of fun times building bicycle jumps, going riding, mountain biking together, pit bike riding etc. My dad's training the whole team and he makes training enjoyable for the team so we all wake up and want to do it. I have seen how some of the other trainers work down here and most of the riders dread going to training so I feel grateful that my dad does such a good job with all of us.

Devin Mitchell (my team manager) took us all to the movies the other day and we saw Unborn. It's a really scary movie that made us feel like little girls in there because we were all screaming and scared of the dark after that. Ha ha ha. Devin also took us all this last weekend to the Anaheim SX. I did a load of camera interviews and at Anaheim 3 I will be on the jumbotron announcing to all of the fans that I will be coming in for 2010. The Americans come in their masses to watch supercross – you can look in almost every garage out here and you will find some sort of motorcycle, quad, dune buggy or golf cart etc. It's cool because you find more people that you have stuff in common with.

Watching SX was a blast and got me excited for what is to come in my near future. There is so much to learn and so many quick riders that I am studying so I will be on top of my game when that time comes. I hope that lots of Brits will come out and support me at Anaheim 1 next year – it would be cool to have my own cheering section. Ha ha ha! Anyways, I have to run now because we are just going out for our motos at our top secret location.

I'll check you next month!

Max



SW KIDS!

WITH CHAMPIONSHIP TITLES ON THE LINE THE SUPERCROSS ACTION FROM LIVERPOOL AND LONDON COMES THICK AND FAST...

Words and photos by **Sutty**

The final three rounds of the Future West supercross series go off in fine style with races in Liverpool's Echo Arena and the O2 in London's Docklands. With championship points on the line, the riders who are lucky enough to make it through the daytime qualifiers and into the evening's points-paying Main Events put on one heck of a show for the massive amounts of fans who turn out in force at Britain's one and only supercross series.

In the Auto class Dylan Woodcock is Mr Consistency throughout the whole series and on his #6 KTM never fails to reach the podium, finishing second three times as well as winning round three in Liverpool. Albie Wilkie takes round two in Liverpool on his way to third in the championship while series' runner-up Jamie Clarke finishes the season as he started it – with a win!

A final lap fall in London's Main Event costs Alfie Bowtell the 65cc championship as a win in the O2 would have put the young KTM star level on points with eventual winner Sid Evans who he'd have then beaten on a tie-breaker. But there's no denying that Evans deserves to take the title as he wins both nights in Liverpool and finishes fifth in London in one of the most entertaining races of the night which sees a multitude of take-out moves, a couple of clattering block passes and more bar-to-bar racing than you can shake a shifty stick at!

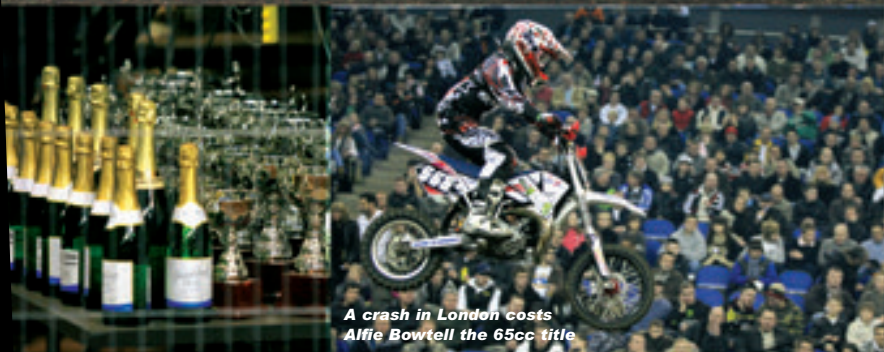
There's no stopping Ben Watson in the 85cc classes as he not only dominates the Small Wheels but also takes the Supermini crown. It's Bradley Ward who finishes second in the SW series after winning in London while Motoshack's Tom Neal takes third overall with some super-consistent scores throughout the four rounds.

It's honours even in the Supermini category heading into London between Watson and Suzuki's James Dunn whose indoor results improve rapidly after a slow start in Sheffield. The final encounter in London is a little exciting as Dunn gains more and more momentum after a slow start while Watson leads from the off! Dunn runs out of time however before he can stick a pass on Ben who takes the title in fine style. Behind Dunn in the points chase is Ben Howell who finishes level on points with Ward but beats him on the tie-breaker rule. A special mention has to go out to Luke Norris who injures himself in Liverpool while leading the Supermini series.

It's a pair of Suzuki-mounted South Easterners who battle it out for the Youth Lites crown as Rowan Hill and Ross Clarke both head into the final round with a great chance of bringing home the bacon. Interestingly, both riders have battled their way through the Future West championships over the years proving that the system for nurturing UK youth supercross talent is working nicely. Neither championship challenger has won a Main Event heading into the O2 although Hill changes that when he dominates the last round from start to finish to take his first ever FWSX title! Clarke finishes second in the race and the series while Christy Harnett – who must be kicking himself after missing round one – finishes third in the standings.



Jamie Clarke snags second overall in the Autos



A crash in London costs Alfie Bowtell the 65cc title

Ben Watson wins both 85cc classes



RESULTS

FINAL SERIES STANDINGS...

AUTO

1	Dylan Woodcock	(KTM)	91 points
2	Jamie Clarke	(Cobra)	84
3	Albie Wilkie	(KTM)	71
4	Brandon Sharples	(KTM)	67
5	Christopher Mills	(KTM)	66
6	Joe Etchells	(KTM)	59

65cc

1	Sid Evans	(KTM)	90 points
2	Gradie Featherstone	(KTM)	87
3	Alfie Bowtell	(KTM)	83
4	Dylan Hodgkins	(KTM)	66
5	Connor Hughes	(KTM)	56
6	Daniel Knight	(KTM)	45

85cc

1	Ben Watson	(KTM)	93 points
2	Bradley Ward	(Kawasaki)	85
3	Tom Neal	(KTM)	77
4	Corrie Southwood	(Suzuki)	67
5	Max Acres	(Suzuki)	64
6	Nathan Dixon	(KTM)	49

SUPERMINI

1	Ben Watson	(KTM)	88 points
2	James Dunn	(Suzuki)	85
3	Ben Howell	(KTM)	60
4	Bradley Ward	(Kawasaki)	60
5	Tom Neal	(KTM)	43
6	John Hawkins	(KTM)	38

YOUTH LITES

1	Rowan Hill	(Suzuki)	87 points
2	Ross Clarke	(Suzuki)	67
3	Christy Harnett	(KTM)	62
4	Dan Brough	(KTM)	53
5	Jim O'Neill	(Yamaha)	43
6	Edward Briscoe	(Kawasaki)	43



FWSX 65cc
champ Sid Evans



Bradley Ward ends the series
second in the 85cc division



Youth Lites champ
Rowan Hill



Auto champ
Dylan Woodcock



Sixth overall in Youth Lites
goes to Edward Briscoe



Supermini runner-up
James Dunn



Gradie Featherstone wins
the 65cc class in London



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UNDER THE RADAR!

MIKE'S PICK OF THE STEALTH STARS...

Before next month's full national preview here's a slightly different angle on who's who and what's going down...

ACU Academy runners Ryan Houghton and Bradley Pocock ripped up the rulebook last year as they went from seemingly midfield form to pack leaders in record time. Brad is coming on strong and maturing with a total MX package at just the right age and looking truly awesome right now. Ryan's case is slightly different...

In reality Ryan has always been well ahead of the game in his age group but just flying under the radar. As a 12-year-old in '07 Big Wheel action it's hardly surprising he went a little unnoticed, slugging it out against kids generally three years older. It's a tough love way to learn but it's definitely paying dividends now.

So, are there any more guys under the radar just waiting for the day when they come of age? One name leaps right off the page – 10-year-old Tayla Smith from Cumbria is a tall lad who elected to ride Small Wheels last year at an early age. But given that his 10th birthday was just last September and he is a Year 5 pupil that makes him for me possibly the best 10-year-old in Europe, let alone this country. Quite a statement but the fact is we won't know the answer to that one for a couple of seasons yet as Tayla is up against the best bunch of

12-year-olds we have seen for a long time in this season's Small Wheel section.

Harry Bradley from Tamworth is another young guy with plenty of national experience over the last four years but he chose to ride Big Wheels last term as a 12-year-old. Harry is a Year 8 school kid and his compatriots on that scale are Jordan Godwin, Liam Garland, Callan Cooper, Sam Winterburn and Ricky Roderick. Looking at Harry's winter form he is a top six runner within his own age group for sure but he rarely hits the headlines.

Looking to the higher age groups there are two more obvious nuggets who have for the last couple of years been underage comparatively but on the brink of real headline news. Jack Rowland and Lewis Trickett were two of the components that went into making the '07 125cc Inters class one of the best competitions of recent years and I fully expect them to hit the heights again this season in Open class events, especially BYMX.

In no particular order right now here's my under 18 table of youth MX talent. As the season goes on the names will be shuffled into order to find best in age. Apologies for anyone missed out – email me your details, especially the school Year 6 11-year-olds as we are a bit thin on the ground with that data.

SCHOOL YEAR 5:

CONRAD MEWSE, DAVID KEET, TAYLA SMITH, DAN KNIGHT, JAKE DEACON.

SCHOOL YEAR 6:

ROBERT YATES.

SCHOOL YEAR 7:

BEN WATSON, MICHAEL ECCLES, OLLIE OSMASTON, CORIE SOUTHWOOD, MATTHEW CALLAGHAN, TOM NEAL, LIAM KNIGHT.

SCHOOL YEAR 8:

JORDAN GODWIN, LIAM GARLAND, CALLUM COOPER, HARRY BRADLEY, SAM WINTERBURN, RICKY RODERICK, SAM WRAGG.

SCHOOL YEAR 9:

RYAN HOUGHTON, LUKE DEAN, ROBBIE MUSCATT, DAN THORNHILL, JAMES DUNN, BEN HOWELL, SCOTT ALDRIDGE.

SCHOOL YEAR 10:

CONNOR WALKLEY, BRAD POCOCK, LUKE HAWKINS, MATTHEW FLEMING, JAMIE McCANNEY, PAUL COATES.

SCHOOL YEAR 11:

JOSH SPINKS, JACK ROWLAND, LEWIS TRICKETT, TURBO TAYLOR, ALFIE SMITH, JAKE SHIPTON.
17 YEARS OLD THIS SEASON:
SCOTT JAMES, DAN McCANNEY, KELVIN TOWNSEND, SEAN McDONALD
18 YEARS OLD THIS SEASON:
JOSH WATERMAN, LEWIS ABBOT, TOMMY FENWICK, JAMIE JACKSON.



Lewis Trickett in '08 EYC action



Harry Bradley tears up the track at Wilden Lane...



...and then poses with the fruits of his labours

Got a story for Rage? Then contact our Youth Editor Mike Gurney at mikegurney55@yahoo.co.uk

PROSHOW!

RED BULL WEEKEND WONDERS

Anyone who competed in or attended the early years of the KWS Masters series will tell you it was the best experience youth motocross has managed to conjure up so far. The cream of the youth racers on the same card as the top pros and all on the best circuits the country has to offer in front of a paying crowd.

For this season the MCF with their Red Bull pro weekend extravaganzas on three of the Elite Youth Cup weekends will be hoping to revive some of the old magic, breathing new life into a well tried and tested winning formula. From every angle it looks like a tasty proposition

and it's really good to see the fixture clash with the BYMX has been resolved.

There would have been no winners, just a lot of losers, if the clash had been allowed to stand so well done the powers-that-be as common sense has ruled. Without doubt the BYMX and Elite series are the top two titles and if you win either or both you can truly call yourself a champion.

It's interesting to note, however, that all four youth series this year offer a completely different experience to those of the recent past. Just two years ago all four championships were virtually in the same format – now they have

all developed a very separate identity offering a much wider base and variety, not a bad thing in these testing times as they all want to be around in years to come.

BYMX is still the one everyone wants on their racing CV and remains pretty much unchanged in the traditional format. In contrast the Elite offers so many options for the over 14s it's just about mind-boggling. Do they ride a 250F or a 250cc two-stroke? Do they compete in Rookies or do they go Open class in the extended up to 21 years age group? And what about having a tilt at Red Bull Pro action?

Decisions, decisions...



G Y M MONKEY!

BILLY'S BACK FROM CALIFORNIA AND LOVING THE SNOW – BUT HE'S LOVING HIS TRAINING EVEN MORE...

Words by Billy MacKenzie

What about the snow! How awesome is that? Waking up in the morning and having to sit listening to the boring old monotone news reporters going on about how bad the snow is and it being the 'worst' in years! B*****s I say! Get off my TV! Man I just can't get over how stupid some of them sound when talking news stories. Who was the trend setter for the monotone, hand gesture, head nodding, eyebrow raising news reporter style? Was it Trevor McDonald? Is he like the Ricky Carmichael of news reading? Does everyone wanna be like him? I can't stand it! Die all news reporters! Get off my TV!

Snow is fun! I've never seen so many kids out playing and having a good time in ages. Driving to the gym I've seen so many snowmen, kids having snowball fights, throwing them at buses and stuff! Sledging, making ice slides, great fun – wish I was young again. I thought about borrowing Dobby's pick-up today and towing my sledge behind it. I might still do it!

Since I got back from Cali-forn-i-a I've been in the gym every day – including the day I got back. I had a bit of a nightmare the last week in the States with my bike blowing up and stuff. That and also helping Tommy move into his new house etc etc meant I didn't really get much riding done so as soon as I got back – jet-lagged and all – I was straight in the gym with Kirk. I dunno why I enjoy it so much? I really think to myself why do I enjoy the drive to the gym? I know it's just gonna be two hours of pain but the high I get when it's done is mega. I've never been so fit in my life. I genuinely thought the training I've done all my life has been hardcore but I can notice such a difference from training with Kirk. I'm constantly cutting about with my

shirt off now! Ha ha!

I have this new-found love for all house, trance and dance music. I'm downloading hours of DJ sets and albums, all the stuff that plays in the gym! Even my new house-mate Fergo – who was an emo-loving, world-hating, smelly goth (joke) – has converted to electro/techno/house! There's a whole new world of music on my horizon and I'm learning fast – I might even go out and buy some DJ decks! I wake up at 6am and put dance music on straight away, then I gym it hardcore with progressive house, then come home and have trance electro on all day. Such happy music!

I have a Facebook addiction right now too! Remember all the times I've written about me just hitting the 'off' button on my PC and running out the house? Well that will probably happen when summer rolls round again but right now with the cold I quite enjoy the comfort of the internet and my warm house. Especially following training – about two or three hours after – when you hit a sleepy patch where you can just fall asleep standing up! I'm gonna fight it today though and get out on my sledge!

My house right now is like a hostel. With staying in the Midlands and knowing so many people from the top to bottom of Britain from motocross my place is a regular stop off for people travelling to find tracks or just going about their normal motocross business. Regulars have included Ash Kane, Georgia, Keith, Andy's mates, Dougan, Easty and I think my bro and Bryan are coming to stay this weekend. It's mega – I love it!

I love walking into a house when there's something going on all the time, I hate walking into an empty house. Guitar Hero is always on flat-out – we've completed it now and I am an

official hard rocker. Not quite expert but nearly!

I'm really struggling to find stuff to talk about so do you want to know what's on my desk as I write this?

- A used snot rag that I haven't put in the bin yet
- My mobile phone
- A pack of pins for my pin board thing
- Vaseline
- White tack
- A ruined camera from travelling that I just can't throw away because it was too expensive!
- A condom (still in the packet)
- A half eaten bar of Thornton's dark chocolate that I brought at Christmas from home in Scotland! Yuk...
- A camera bag
- A glass of change and coins
- VO5 texturising gum hair product
- A travel adaptor plug
- A pair of scissors
- A pencil and pen
- A wrist band thing that's broke
- A little toy motorbike that my French girl from Australia gave me (cute ain't it?)
- A few receipts
- Oh and a little notebook diary thing

I'm looking forward to the first race of the season so much! My factory bike has arrived too – full spec HRC Honda! Ooooo, I can't wait! Hawkstone here we come baby!

What a s**t column this has been – sorry guys (I'll send a load of pics from the States to try fill it up)! But the last two columns have been mega though at over 2000 words so let me off with a short one this month and I'll get back on the case when exciting things are happening again!

Billy 211





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